



GCE Psychology A – Revised Specification for first teaching September 2011 and Examination 2012 onwards.

Each change has been proposed in the light of experience in setting and marking questions and with due regard to teachers’ comments. In each case, the change has been for one of four reasons:

1. Reorganising/rewording which is intended to clarify content
2. Minor reductions in content to ensure comparability across topics
3. Amending references to specific skills to make the skill requirement more explicit
4. Changes to the mark allocations – on PSYA3 and PSYA4 (Sections A and B), each topic will now be worth 8 AO1 marks and 16 AO2/3 marks, making the total for PSYA3 72 marks and the total for PSYA4 83 marks.

Details of each suggested change are given below, along with a rationale for each change and details of how the change would affect teacher delivery.

Spec Ref	Change	Content change for teaching purposes
PSYA1		
Cognitive Psychology - Memory		
Memory in everyday life	Reordering of wording to improve coherence.	No change.
Developmental Psychology – Early Social development		
Attachment	Types of insecure attachment and the strange situation are named so that exam questions can be more explicit.	You now need to distinguish between insecure avoidant and insecure resistant.
Attachment in everyday life	Former wording was not sufficiently clear.	Ensure that students have focused on ways in which child care has been influenced by research.
PSYA2		
Biological Psychology - Stress		
Stress in everyday life	Clarification of the required content. The original wording lacked detail and as a result, teachers covered more material than was intended/required.	Focus on evidence that life events and daily hassles are sources of stress. You only need to cover workload and control in relation to workplace stress You do now need to cover Type B and hardiness.

	<p>Removal of coping with stress in order to reduce overload in this section.</p> <p>Revised terminology to reduce likelihood of students miss reading physiological methods of stress management.</p> <p>Removal of choice re which form of CBT will be covered.</p>	<p>Modify wording on past paper questions when using them for practice.</p> <p>You must now cover SIT.</p>
Social Psychology – Social Influence		
Social Influence	<p>Conformity and social influence have been brought together to improve cohesion.</p> <p>Obedience <i>to authority</i> is intended to provide clarity.</p>	<p>Modify wording on past paper questions when using them for practice</p>
Social Influence in everyday life	<p>Individual differences in independent behaviour did not link well with the remainder of the section so has been deleted</p> <p>Rewording intended to clarify content</p>	<p>The role of minority influence in social change is now a requirement. You might consider revising the wording of past paper questions when using them for practice.</p>
Individual Differences – Psychopathology (Abnormality)		
Defining and explaining psychological abnormality	<p>The reference to key features resulted in focus on concepts/structures at the expense of processes and assumptions.</p>	<p>The aim is not for you to teach more but to ensure a balance of concepts/structures and processes and assumptions that are directly relevant to abnormality.</p>
PSYA3		
Biological rhythms and sleep		
Biological rhythms	<p>The second bullet point has been amended because understanding of the explanations, not just the consequences is needed.</p>	<p>Ensure explanations and consequences are covered.</p>
Sleep	<p>Reordering to clarify content.</p>	<p>Ensure students realise that life changes is an element of the nature of sleep not a separate topic.</p>
Disorders of sleep	<p>Removal of factors influencing insomnia as these overlapped with explanations.</p>	<p>The factors influencing insomnia will need to be incorporated into the explanations.</p>

Perception		
Development of perception	Removal of nature-nurture as this compromised comparability with other options in terms of issues and debates.	Depth/distance visual constancies are now a requirement.
Relationships		
Evolutionary explanations of human reproductive behaviour	Renamed for clarification. Some refocusing of the second bullet point to improve coherence.	Removal of parent-offspring conflict and focusing on sex differences in parental investment.
Effects of early experience and culture on adult relationships	Content reduced as it was previously excessive. Rewording of the second bullet point to provide clarification and increase the scope for assessment of evaluative skills.	You can now consider a narrower range of material as parent child relationships and interaction with peers are no longer requirements. You will need to adopt a more analytical approach focusing on how culture influences relationships
Aggression		
Biological explanations for aggression	Removal of the reference to 'the role' to increase clarity.	Modify wording on past paper questions when using them for practice.
Evolution and human aggression	Clarification that it is <i>evolutionary</i> explanations that are required. Warfare has replaced lynch mobs as an example. This is mainly because much of the research on lynch mobs was from social psychology.	Centres that have, in the past, taught social explanations of group displays will now need to teach evolutionary explanations. Social explanations could provide the basis of commentary on evolutionary explanations.
Eating behaviour		
Eating behaviour	Inclusion of the word 'and' in the second bullet point to clarify that both explanations for the success and failure of dieting are required.	No change
Biological explanations of eating behaviour	Removal of reference to 'the role' to increase clarity.	Modify wording on past paper questions when using them for practice.
Eating disorders	Clearer presentation of requirement to cover biological and psychological explanations in relation to the <i>same</i> disorder.	
Gender		
Psychological explanations of gender development	Reduction of content, Dysphoria more appropriately	Androgyny is removed. This may require re structuring your

	located in biological explanations.	delivery to emphasise links to biosocial approach
Social influences on gender	The second bullet point is amended to stress the <i>influence</i> in order to set questions that assess AO2/3.	Obviously you still need to teach studies, but the focus of assessment would be on how culture influences gender role.
Intelligence and learning		
Theories of intelligence	Texts differ in the way they categorise theories therefore the requirements need to be more explicit.	Gardner's theory is no longer a requirement but you still have to cover 2 information processing theories
Human Intelligence	Renamed to reflect focus on human intelligence	No Change
Cognition and development		
Development of thinking	Content reduced. Bruner's theory no longer a requirement	You no longer have to teach Bruner, but you may wish to still cover some points given their value in relation to applications of cog dev theory to education.
Development of moral understanding	Content reduced. Prosocial reasoning no longer a requirement.	
Development of social cognition	Removal of the names in brackets as their status was not clear to teachers.	
PSYA4		
Psychopathology – Section A		
Phobic disorders and obsessive compulsive disorder have been separated out to make question setting and question wording simpler.		
Psychology in Action – Section B		
Issues and debates did not sit well here. The AO2/3 credit is earned mainly through application where issues and debates would not be appropriate. There is no longer a requirement to refer to issues and debates in examination answers for this section.		
Media		
Media influences on social behaviour	The inclusion of 'positive and negative effects' in the second bullet point clarifies content and reminds teachers that computers can have positive effects.	For some teachers this may mean they need to review their selection of research into the effects and note that it is particularly the effects on behaviour. It no longer needs to be restricted to young people.
Media and persuasion	Changes to title and wording reflect the applied media focus of the subsection rather than straight social psychology. Material that compromises the integrity of this being an applied area has been removed.	The changes mean there is less theory to teach here and so more chance to focus on application.
The psychology of 'celebrity'	The introduction of the word 'including' in the second bullet point permits the use of celebrity	Celebrity worship and celebrity stalking must both be covered.

	worship and celebrity stalking in question wording.	
The psychology of addictive behaviour		
Models of addictive behaviour	Rewording provides clarification.	Initiation, maintenance and relapse need to be applied to both smoking and gambling
Vulnerability to addiction	Renaming and rewording provides clarification.	This section is now much more prescriptive. Teachers will need to check what they previously covered and ensure stress, peers, age and personality are taught
Reducing addictive behaviour	Content reduction to increase cohesion of the subsection. Removal of legislation as it was encouraging a focus on the law not psychology.	Theory of Planned behaviour is the only theory required.
Anomalistic psychology		
The study of anomalous experience	Adoption of wording that facilitates question setting. Rewording to clarify that only methodological issues are required.	No real change to content
Explanations for anomalous experience	Restructured to reduce overlap and increase coherence	This section has undergone most restructuring. You will need to move material. Some material is no longer required eg there is no longer an explicit requirement to address cognitive and biological factors although these this material can be used in the content of explanations. Some new terms/concepts could now be used in examination questions eg probability judgements and magical thinking so you will need to consider carefully using past paper questions for practice.
Research into exceptional experience	Renamed Research into exceptional experience'. The focus on research and explanations is now clearer.	
Psychological Research and Scientific Method		
The application of the scientific method in	Rewording to provide clarification.	Replicability and objectivity are now a requirement but generation of laws and principles are no longer required.

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