Psychology

Course Description

VCE Psychology enables students to explore how people think, feel and behave through the use of a biopsychosocial approach. As a scientific model, this approach considers biological, psychological and social factors and their complex interactions in the understanding of psychological phenomena. The study explores the connection between the brain and behaviour by focusing on several key interrelated aspects of the discipline: the interplay between genetics and environment, individual differences and group dynamics, sensory perception and awareness, memory and learning, and mental health. Students examine classical and contemporary research and the use of imaging technologies, models and theories to understand how knowledge in psychology has evolved and continues to evolve in response to new evidence and discoveries. An understanding of the complexities and diversity of psychology leads students to appreciate the interconnectedness between different content areas both within psychology, and across psychology and the other sciences.

Course Structure

Unit 1 – How are behaviour and mental processes shaped?

This unit will focus on human development involves changes in thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Students are to investigate the structure and functioning of the human brain and the role it plays in the overall functioning of the human nervous system. Students explore brain plasticity and the influence that brain damage may have on a person's psychological functioning.

Area of Study

1. What influences psychological development?
2. How are mental processes and behaviour influenced by the brain?
3. How does contemporary psychology conduct and validate psychological research?

Unit 2 – How do internal and external factors influence behaviour and mental processes?

This unit will focus on a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are influenced by a variety of biological, psychological and social factors. Students will investigate how perception of stimuli enables a person to interact with the world around them and how their perception of stimuli can be distorted. They evaluate the role social cognition plays in a person's attitudes, perception of themselves and relationships with others. Students explore a variety of factors and contexts that can influence the behaviour of an individual and groups. They examine the contribution that classical and contemporary research has made to the understanding of human perception and why individuals and groups behave in specific ways.

Area of Study

1. How are people influenced to behave in particular ways?
2. What influences a person's perception of the world?
3. How do scientific investigations develop understanding of influences on perception and behaviour?

Unit 3 – How does experience affect behaviour and mental processes?

This unit will focus on the nervous system influences behaviour and the way people experience the world. Students will examine both macro-level and micro-level functioning of the nervous system to explain how the human nervous system enables a person to interact with the world around them. They explore how stress may affect a person's psychological functioning and consider the causes and management of stress. Students investigate how mechanisms of memory and learning lead to the acquisition of knowledge, the development of new capacities and changed behaviours. They consider the limitations and fallibility of memory and how memory can be improved. Students examine the contribution that classical and contemporary research has made to the understanding of the structure and function of the nervous system, and to the understanding of biological, psychological and social factors that influence learning and memory.

Area of Study

1. How does the nervous system enable psychological functioning?
2. How do people learn and remember?

Unit 4 – How is mental wellbeing supported and maintained?

This unit will focus on consciousness and mental health are two of many psychological constructs that can be explored by studying the relationship between the mind, brain and behaviour. Students will examine the nature of consciousness and how changes in levels of consciousness can affect mental processes and behaviour. They consider the role of sleep and the impact that sleep disturbances may have on a person's functioning. Students explore the concept of a mental health continuum and apply a biopsychosocial approach, as a scientific model, to analyse mental health and disorder. They use specific phobia to illustrate how the development and management of a mental disorder can be considered as an interaction between biological, psychological and social factors. Students examine the contribution that classical and contemporary research has made to the understanding of consciousness, including sleep, and the development of an individual's mental functioning and wellbeing.

Area of Study

1. How does sleep affect mental processes and behaviour?
2. What influences mental wellbeing?
3. How is scientific inquiry used to investigate mental processes and psychological functioning?

Entry and Recommendations

There are no prerequisites for entry to Units 1, 2 and 3. Students must undertake Unit 3 prior to undertaking Unit 4. Students entering Unit 3 without Units 1 and/or 2 may be required to undertake additional preparation as prescribed by their teacher.

Assessment

Satisfactory Completion

Demonstration of achievement of outcomes and satisfactory completion of a unit are determined by evidence gained through the assessment of a range of learning activities and tasks.

Level of Achievement

Unit 1 and 2

- Coursework
  - Tests
  - Practical activities
  - Scientific research
  - Examination

Unit 3 and 4

- Unit 3 School-based Assessment (20%)
  - Test
  - Presentation
  - Annotation of practical activity
- Unit 4 School-based Assessment (30%)
  - Test
  - Case study
  - Scientific poster
- Examination (50%)