



XV. GIMNAZIJA
International Baccalaureate Department
Diploma Programme



Psychology

Course description 2019/2020

WHAT IS THE COURSE ABOUT?

Psychology is the rigorous and systematic study of mental processes and behaviour. It is a complex subject which draws on concepts, methods and understandings from a number of different disciplines. There is no single approach that would describe or explain mental processes and behaviour on its own as human beings are complex animals, with highly developed frontal lobes, cognitive abilities, involved social structures and cultures. The study of behaviour and mental processes requires a multidisciplinary approach and the use of a variety of research techniques whilst recognising that behaviour is not a static phenomenon, it is adaptive, and as the world, societies and challenges facing societies change, so does behaviour.

At the core of the DP psychology course is an introduction to three different approaches to understanding behaviour:

- biological approach to understanding behaviour
- cognitive approach to understanding behaviour
- sociocultural approach to understanding behaviour.

The knowledge, concepts, theories and research that have developed the understanding in these fields will be studied and critically evaluated to answer some of the questions being asked by psychologists today. Furthermore, the interaction of these approaches to studying psychology will form the basis of a holistic and integrated approach to understanding mental processes and behaviour as a complex, dynamic phenomenon, allowing students to appreciate the diversity as well as the commonality between their own behaviour and that of others. The contribution and the interaction of the three approaches can be best understood through the options. The options provide an opportunity to take what is learned from the study of the approaches to psychology and put it into the context of specific lines of inquiry, broaden students' experience of the discipline and develop the students' critical inquiry skills.

Surrounding the approaches and the options are the overarching themes of research and ethics. A consideration of both is paramount to the nature of the subject. Psychologists employ a range of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, in order to test their observations and hypotheses. As a part of the core syllabus, DP psychology promotes an understanding of the various approaches to research and how they have been used in order to critically reflect on the evidence as well as assist in the design, implementation, analysis and evaluation of the students' own investigations. Psychology studies human beings and as such it is paramount that the ethical implications in any line of investigation, and at all points in the course, are fully explored and understood to ensure that ethical guidelines are followed at all times.

AIMS:

The aims of the psychology course at SL and at HL are to:

1. develop an understanding of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural factors affecting mental processes and behaviour
2. apply an understanding of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural factors affecting mental processes and behaviour to at least one applied area of study
3. understand diverse methods of inquiry
4. understand the importance of ethical practice in psychological research in general and observe ethical practice in their own inquiries
5. ensure that ethical practices are upheld in all psychological inquiry and discussion
6. develop an awareness of how psychological research can be applied to address real-world problems and promote positive change.

OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the psychology course at SL or at HL, students will be expected to demonstrate the following:

1. Knowledge and comprehension of specified content
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of key terms and concepts in psychology.
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of a range of psychological theories and research studies.
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches to mental processes and behaviour.
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of research methods used in psychology.
2. Application and analysis
 - Demonstrate an ability to use examples of psychological research and psychological concepts to formulate an argument in response to a specific question.
 - Demonstrate application and analysis of a range of psychological theories and research studies.
 - Demonstrate application and analysis of the knowledge relevant to areas of applied psychology.
 - At HL only, analyse qualitative and quantitative research in psychology.
3. Synthesis and evaluation
 - Evaluate the contribution of psychological theories to understanding human psychology.
 - Evaluate the contribution of research to understanding human psychology.
 - Evaluate the contribution of the theories and research in areas of applied psychology.
 - At HL only, evaluate research scenarios from a methodological and ethical perspective.
4. Selection and use of skills appropriate to psychology
 - Demonstrate the acquisition of skills required for experimental design, data collection and presentation, data analysis and the evaluation of a simple experiment while demonstrating ethical practice.
 - Work in a group to design a method for a simple experimental investigation, organize the investigation and record the required data for a simple experiment.
 - Write a report of a simple experiment.

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES:

- Formative assessment informs both teaching and learning. It is concerned with providing accurate and helpful feedback to students and teachers on the kind of learning taking place and the nature of students' strengths and weaknesses in order to help develop students' understanding and capabilities. Formative assessment can also help to improve teaching quality, as it can provide information to monitor progress towards meeting the course aims and objectives. Formative assessment in IB psychology includes misconception checks, worksheets, ungraded quizzes, class discussions and debates, peer feedback, etc.
- Summative assessment gives an overview of previous learning and is concerned with measuring student achievement. Summative assessment in IB psychology consists of the same types of questions (short-answer and extended-response or essay questions) as those used in IBDP examinations (matura) and it includes exams after each unit, exams at the end of each semester and exams at the end of DP Year 1 and DP year 2.

IMPLEMENTATION:

DP Year 1: The school offers 4 psychology lessons per week for students taking the subject at Standard Level and 5 psychology lessons per week for students taking the subject at Higher Level.

DP Year 2: The school offers 3 psychology lessons per week for students taking the subject at Standard Level and 5 psychology lessons per week for students taking the subject at Higher Level.

TOPICS:

- Introduction to psychology, ethical considerations and qualitative research
- Quantitative research
- Cognitive development
- Brain development
- Childhood trauma and resilience
- Poverty/socioeconomic status
- Role of peers and play
- Internal assessment
- Development of empathy and theory of mind
- Gender identity and social roles
- Attachment
- Personal relationships (HL only)
- Group dynamics (HL only)
- Social responsibility (HL only)
- core extensions (HL only) – The role of animal research in understanding human behaviour, Cognitive processing in the digital world, The influence of globalization on individual attitudes, identities and behaviour