# Psychology

## The subject

Would you like to gain a better understanding of human behaviour? This is what psychology is about and via biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches, students will learn how to study and analyse human behavior and mental processes rigorously. Through knowledge about brain, nervous system, hormones, neurotransmitters, genetics and evolution, students will develop an understanding of biological explanations of human behavior. Through knowledge about cognitive schemas, memory models, emotions, thinking and decision-making, students will develop an understanding of cognitive explanations of human behavior. Finally yet importantly, through knowledge about culture, norms, group processes, stereotypes and social identity, students will develop an understanding of social - and cultural explanations of human behaviour.

The study of behaviour and mental processes requires a multidisciplinary approach and the use of a variety of research methods. Students will learn how to apply methods such as lab experiments, brain imaging technologies, field experiments, case studies, observations, interviews, correlational studies etc., in order to collect data that can help explain human behavior. Critical thinking skills are developed through the psychology course, via evaluation of the theories and studies in relation to validity, reliability and ethical consideration. The internal assessment in psychology requires the students to plan, conduct and evaluate a simple experiment. This project allows the students to work practically with the subject.

**The Teachers**

Kristine Renner Johansen (KRJ)

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## Psychology and Theory of Knowledge

TOK is invaluable for exploring some of the bigger questions relevant to the teaching, learning and practice of psychology. Questions that can be explored include the following; can models and theories be used to understand and predict human behaviour? Does a researcher's choice of methodology affect the reliability or credibility of research? Is what we know about human behaviour limited by our ethical considerations? Are emotions universal? Are the methods of the natural sciences applicable in the social sciences? There are a variety of ways of gaining knowledge in psychology, including observation and experimentation, inductive and deductive reasoning, and the collection of evidence. Having followed a psychology course, students should be able to reflect critically on the various ways of knowing and on the methods used in the social sciences.

## Psychology and International-mindedness

The psychology course develops an understanding of how our behaviour is shaped by the societies and cultures we experience and how we in turn shape our environment. Through cultural psychology, the course aids in the understanding of cultural origins of behaviour and cognition, as well as understanding how the collective influences the individual. Psychology also has a global and digital perspective, which investigates how globalization and digital technologies affects the individual behaviour and cognitive processes. In general, psychology presents perspectives that allow the students to be open-minded and knowledgeable in relation to understand social interaction between people with diverse cultural backgrounds.

| Skills and toolkit (ATL) | Topics | Assessments objectives |
|---|---|---|
| • holistic approach to the content<br>• critical thinking skills<br>• Communication skills<br>• Social skills<br>• Collaboration | Approaches to behaviour:<br>• Biological approach<br>• Cognitive approach<br>• Sociocultural approach<br><br>Options:<br>• Abnormal Psychology<br>• Developmental psychology<br>• Health psychology<br>• Human relationships<br><br>Research methodology | • Knowledge and comprehension<br>• Application and analysis<br>• Synthesis and evaluation<br>• Selection and use of skills appropriate to psychology |

**Examples of concepts and conceptual understanding in Psychology**

- **Neuroplasticity**: The development of neural networks through repetition and neural pruning is both genetic and subject to environmental influences. Neural networks can change developmentally, over time or after injury.
- **Hormones**: Hormones are chemicals released by specific glands in the body to regulate medium and long-term changes in the body.
- **Models of memory**: The Multi-Store Model of Memory and The Working Memory Model provide a framework for an understanding human memory processes over time.
- **Schema theory**: Cognitive schemas are seen as mental representations that organize our knowledge, beliefs and expectations. Multiple studies have indicated that schemas influence memory processes in encoding, storage and retrieval. Schema processing is to a large extent automatic and non-conscious which saves cognitive energy but at the same time could result in biases in thinking and memory processes.
- **Social identity theory**: Social identity theory refers to the way someone thinks about themselves and evaluates themselves in relation to groups. Social identity theory posits that a person's sense of who they are is based on their membership of social groups.
- **Stereotypes**: A stereotype is a generalized and rather fixed way of thinking about a group of people.
- **Triangulation**: Triangulation is an approach used to ensure enough evidence is available to make a valid claim about the results of a study. Methodological triangulation tests a theory or a psychological phenomenon using different methods of inquiry. Data from a variety of methods (survey, interview, case study, experiments) is used to help validate the results of a study.

**Link to IBO subject brief**[https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/5895a05412144fe890312bad52b17044/psychology-sl-hl-2019-en.pdf](https://www.ibo.org/contentassets/5895a05412144fe890312bad52b17044/psychology-sl-hl-2019-en.pdf)