

International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief

Individuals and societies: Psychology

First assessment 2019

The Diploma Programme (DP) is a rigorous pre-university course of study designed for students in the 16 to 19 age range. It is a broad-based two-year course that aims to encourage students to be knowledgeable and inquiring, but also caring and compassionate. There is a strong emphasis on encouraging students to develop intercultural understanding, open-mindedness, and the attitudes necessary for them to respect and evaluate a range of points of view.

The course is presented as six academic areas enclosing a central core. Students study two modern languages (or a modern language and a classical language), a humanities or social science subject, an experimental science, mathematics and one of the creative arts. Instead of an arts subject, students can choose two subjects from another area. It is this comprehensive range of subjects that makes the Diploma Programme a demanding course of study designed to prepare students effectively for university entrance. In each of the academic areas students have flexibility in making their choices, which means they can choose subjects that particularly interest them and that they may wish to study further at university.

Normally, three subjects (and not more than four) are taken at higher level (HL), and the others are taken at standard level (SL). The IB recommends 240 teaching hours for HL subjects and 150 hours for SL. Subjects at HL are studied in greater depth and breadth than at SL.

In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, activity, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

This IB DP subject brief has four key components:

- I. Course description and aims II. Curriculum model overview III. Assessment model IV. Sample questions



I. Course description and aims

At the core of the DP psychology course is an introduction to three different approaches to understanding behaviour: the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches. Students study and critically evaluate the knowledge, concepts, theories and research that have developed the understanding in these fields.

The interaction of these approaches to studying psychology forms 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 is understood through the four options in the course, focusing on areas of applied psychology: abnormal psychology, developmental psychology, health psychology, and the psychology of relationships. The options provide an opportunity to take what is learned from the study of the approaches to psychology and apply it to specific lines of inquiry.

Psychologists employ a range of research methods, both qualitative and quantitative, to test their observations and hypotheses. DP psychology promotes an understanding of the various approaches to research and how they are used to critically reflect on the evidence as well as assist in the design, implementation, analysis and evaluation of the students'

own investigations. 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.

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

- develop an understanding of the biological, cognitive and socio-cultural factors affecting mental processes and behaviour
- apply an understanding of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural factors affecting mental processes and behaviour to at least one applied area of study
- understand diverse methods of inquiry
- understand the importance of ethical practice in psychological research in general and observe ethical practice in their own inquiries
- ensure that ethical practices are upheld in all psychological inquiry and discussion
- develop an awareness of how psychological research can be applied to address real-world problems and promote positive change
- provide students with a basis for further study, work and leisure through the use of an additional language
- foster curiosity, creativity and a lifelong enjoyment of language learning.

II. Curriculum model overview

Syllabus component	Teaching hours	
	SL	HL
Core <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biological approach to understanding behaviour Cognitive approach to understanding behaviour Sociocultural approach to understanding behaviour Approaches to researching behaviour 	90	120
Options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abnormal psychology Developmental psychology Health psychology Psychology of human relationships 	20	40
Internal assessment Experimental study	20	20
Total teaching hours	150	240

III. Assessment model

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

- Knowledge and comprehension of specified content
 - Demonstrate knowledge and comprehension of:
 - key terms and concepts in psychology
 - a range of psychological theories and studies
 - the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches to mental processes and behaviour
 - research methods used in psychology.
- 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
 - the knowledge relevant to areas of applied psychology.
 - At HL only, analyse qualitative and quantitative research in psychology.
- Synthesis and evaluation
 - Evaluate the contribution of:
 - psychological theories to understanding human psychology
 - research to understanding human psychology
 - the theories and research in areas of applied psychology.
 - At HL only, evaluate research scenarios from a methodological and ethical perspective.

- 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 at a glance

Type of assessment	Format of assessment	Time (hours)		Weighting of final grade (%)	
		SL	HL	SL	HL
External		3	5	75	80
Paper 1	Three short answer questions on the core. One essay from a choice of three on the biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches. HL only: essays will reference additional HL topic.	2	2	50	40
Paper 2	SL: one question from a choice of three on one option. HL: two questions; one each from a choice of three on two options.	1	2	25	20
Paper 3	Three short answer questions on approaches to research.		1		20
Internal		20	20	25	20
Experimental study	A report on an experimental study undertaken by the student.	20	20	25	20

IV. Sample questions

- Outline one study investigating schema.
- Discuss ethical considerations linked to genetic research into human behaviour.
- (HL only)** Discuss how the use of technology affects one cognitive process.

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