Psychology – Core 1: What is psychology?

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Content provided in this learning sequence is not intended to form a complete program of study for this topic. Content may be adapted, modified and supplemented to meet the individual requirements of students undertaking the Psychology course.

Language demands in the Psychology course may result in the need for additional adjustments, teachers will need to consider the ability and background of students in their class and plan lessons that support their learning needs.

Appropriate adjustments may include use of: explicit instructions and defining key terms/concepts, use of pictures and diagrams, clearly labelled to support students to access the tasks and speech to text or augmentative communication devices.

## Feedback

Let us know what you think about this resource! Complete the [feedback survey](https://forms.office.com/r/gZsWMnFfjB).

## QR code**Focus**

Students will identify psychology as a scientific discipline which studies mental processes and human behaviour, the world of the psychologist, the history of psychology and present-day theories of psychology.

Students will learn how the knowledge gained by research psychologists is used by applied psychologists in their dealings with individuals and groups. Students will appreciate the eclectic nature of psychological theories and the contributions made by psychologists of the past in formulating contemporary theories.

### Outcomes

A student:

* **PSY5-1** explains how the field of psychology provides scientific explanations for the mind and behaviour through research, theories and approaches
* **PSY5-2** explains the main approaches to the study of the nature of human behaviour and the strengths and weaknesses of those approaches
* **PSY5-4** explains a range of psychological theories and identifies the application of these theories to everyday life
* **PSY5-6** recognises the applications and influence of psychology in popular culture and its importance to social factors
* **PSY5-8** communicates psychological information and ideas using appropriate written, oral and visual forms

## Learning sequence 1 – Mental processes and observable behaviour

Students explain that psychology is the scientific study of mental processes and how they affect observable behaviour

### Psychology as a scientific study

**Teacher note** – The intro to psychology video clip moves very quickly and may need to be stopped several times to give students time to process the content

* [Brainstorm](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/542#.Ya_VOHHKigo.link) the following terms, using a [concept map](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/577#.Ybkrw6Drwr0.link) to record responses:
	+ Psychology
	+ Mental processes
	+ Observable behaviour.
* Using responses collated in the brainstorming activity, construct your own definition of psychology.
* Watch [Intro to psychology: Crash Course #1 (10:53)](https://thecrashcourse.com/courses/intro-to-psychology-crash-course-psychology-1/) and make notes on some of the features of psychology.
* Re-examine your definition and make changes based on your increased knowledge.
* Discuss how the role of a psychologist is different to that of a psychiatrist or counsellor.
* Use a [Venn diagram](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/599#.Ybkrw5Gxkts.link) to differentiate between the role of psychologists, psychiatrists and counsellors.

## Learning sequence 2 – Early psychologists

Students recognise the historical roots of the study of human behaviour and the contributions of early psychologists including:

* Charles Darwin
* Wilhelm Wundt
* Sigmund Freud
* William James
* B.F. Skinner
* John B. Watson

### The study of human behaviour

* Discuss how human behaviour is different and/or similar to that of other living creatures.
* Research the history of Psychology and its roots in philosophy
* Compare the differences between the early schools of thought known as structuralism and functionalism
* Watch [The fight flight freeze response (3:05).](https://youtu.be/jEHwB1PG_-Q)
* Complete a [quick, write](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/548#.Ybkrw1t_98E.link) activity to construct answers to the following questions:
	+ Why do people behave the way they do?
	+ Why do people react differently to similar circumstances?
* Discuss the nature-nurture debate. How much of our behaviour is inherited and how much is the result of the world in which we live?

### Early psychologists

**Teacher note** – You may choose to allocate the psychologists to students rather than students selecting. When completing the gallery walk, information can be presented in a range of formats appropriate to the student’s preferences and abilities.

* Select one of the early psychologists and research the contributions they made to the field of psychology
	+ [Charles Darwin](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Charles-Darwin)
	+ [Wilhelm Wundt](https://www.simplypsychology.org/wundt.html)
	+ [Sigmund Freud](https://www.simplypsychology.org/Sigmund-Freud.html)
	+ [William James](https://www.britannica.com/biography/William-James/Interest-in-psychology)
	+ [B.F. Skinner](https://www.britannica.com/biography/B-F-Skinner)
	+ [John B. Watson](https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-B-Watson).
* Construct a biography for your chosen psychologist.
* Collaborate with other students who have researched the same psychologist to construct a presentation to contribute to a [gallery walk](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Card/555#.YbkrwyhhFVA.link).
* Conduct the gallery walk activity, and add questions to each presentation. Each group should respond to the questions posed.
* Compile the information gathered on each psychologist and use it to construct a timeline of contributions to psychology.
* Discuss the statement ‘Wilhelm Wundt is the father of academic psychology’.

## Learning sequence 3 – Fields of psychology

Students:

* examine the role of the psychologist, including areas of specialisation within the field of psychology, for example:
	+ clinical psychologists
	+ military psychologists
	+ environmental psychologists
	+ forensic psychologists
* investigate the tasks involved in some of the major fields of psychology.

### Areas of specialisation

**Teacher note** – When completing the university research, some universities do not publish their course brochure/information online and it may need to be requested in advance.

* Brainstorm the places that psychologist work and add responses to a class [jamboard](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningTool/Card/593#.Ybpe2dxYP_E.link).
* Access the website for a university of your choosing that offers a Psychology course, complete the following questions:
	+ Which faculty area provided the course?
	+ How long does it take to become a psychologist?
	+ Which areas of specialisation does the university offer?
	+ What are the main areas of study within the course?
	+ Are they prerequisites for entry?
	+ What are 3 things you have discovered about the study Psychology that you didn’t know before starting this task?
* Briefly outline the education and training required to practice as a psychologist in Australia.
* Select a psychologist from the [Which type of psychologist is right for me?](https://psychology.org.au/psychology/about-psychology/types-of-psychologists) section of the Australian Psychological Society webpage and identify:
	+ Who they assist
	+ Tasks they may perform
* Discuss how the workplace environment impacts on the role performed by the psychologist and the tasks involved.
* Revisit the class jamboard and add any new workplaces or industries that were not included in the initial brainstorm.

### Tasks involved

* Watch [Psychologists talks about their careers (5:22)](https://psychology.org.au/training-and-careers/careers-and-studying-psychology/careers-in-psychology/psychologists-talk-about-careers) and take note of the tasks involved in each of the different areas of specialisation
* Complete table 1 for each area of specialisation.

Table 1 – Psychology speciality – places of employment and tasks performed

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Psychology speciality | Places of employment | Tasks completed |
| Clinical |  |  |
| Military |  |  |
| Environmental |  |  |
| Forensic |  |  |
| Other (specify) |  |  |

## Learning sequence 4 – Major approaches to psychology

Students:

* investigate the six major approaches to present-day psychology and the theories behind them, including:
	+ biopsychology
	+ behaviourism
	+ psychoanalysis
	+ humanism
	+ cognitive psychology
	+ sociocultural psychology.
* distinguish between research and applied psychology and the roles of each.

### The six approaches to present-day psychology

* Watch [Perspectives in Psychology (9:06)](https://youtu.be/41f04JKT1DI) for an overview of present-day approaches to Psychology. Take notes to assist in completion of the table below.
* Using the information from the video and further research, complete table 2.

Table 2 – Psychological approaches and associated psychologists

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Approach | Associated psychologists | Theory |
| Biopsychology |  |  |
| Behaviourism |  |  |
| Psychoanalysis |  |  |
| Humanism |  |  |
| Cognitive |  |  |
| Sociocultural |  |  |
| Evolutionary |  |  |

#### **Case study**

Pat is a first-year student at university. Pat has been drinking a lot lately and there is concern that Pat may be an alcoholic.

* Review the case study of Pat (as presented in the video) and complete the following tasks:
	+ Provide a fictional background for Pat including age, gender, family background, past experiences.
	+ Offer a possible reason for Pat’s behaviour using one psychological perspective from those examined in the previous activity.
* Compare your reasoning with another student who used a different psychological perspective to explain the behaviour.
* Consider the differences between the fictional background created for your ‘Pat’ when compared to the other student’s fictional scenario. What are the key differences?
* Complete the activity for a second time, using your psychological perspective to explain the behaviour. Does the change in circumstances result in a different reasoning for pats behaviour?

### Differences between research and applied psychology

* Construct a definition for research psychology and applied psychology.
* Use your definitions and further research to complete table 3 below.

Table 3 – Research and applied psychology

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Features | Research psychology | Applied psychology |
| Definition |  |  |
| Associated Psychologists |  |  |
| Tasks involved |  |  |
| Types of workplace/industry |  |  |

Identify the areas of similarity and difference between the fields of research and applied psychology. Represent your information in a Venn diagram.

## References

**Links to third-party material and websites**

**Please note that the provided (reading/viewing material/list/links/texts) are a suggestion only and implies no endorsement, by the New South Wales Department of Education, of any author, publisher or book title. School principals and teachers are best placed to assess the suitability of resources that would complement the curriculum and reflect the needs and interests of their students.**

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