

The IB Diploma Programme, for students aged 16 to 19, is an academically challenging and balanced programme of education that prepares students for success at university and life beyond. Students take courses in six different subject groups, maintaining both breadth and depth of study. Psychology higher level is in group 3, individuals and societies. In addition, three core elements—the extended essay, theory of knowledge and creativity, action, service—are compulsory and central to the philosophy of the programme.

**About the IB:** For over 40 years the IB has built a reputation for high-quality, challenging programmes of education that develop internationally minded young people who are well prepared for the challenges of life in the 21st century and able to contribute to creating a better, more peaceful world.

The IB subject briefs illustrate key course components in the IB Diploma Programme.

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

## Overview of the psychology higher level course and curriculum model

### I. Course description and aims

The IB Diploma Programme higher level psychology course aims to develop an awareness of how research findings can be applied to better understand human behaviour and how ethical practices are upheld in psychological inquiry. Students learn to understand the biological, cognitive and sociocultural influences on human behaviour and explore alternative explanations of behaviour. They also understand and use diverse methods of psychological inquiry.

In addition, the course is designed to:

- encourage the systematic and critical study of human experience and behaviour; physical, economic and social environments; and the history and development of social and cultural institutions
- develop the capacity to identify, analyse critically and evaluate theories, concepts and arguments about the nature and activities of the individual and society
- enable students to collect, describe and analyse data used in studies, test hypotheses; and interpret complex data and source material
- enable the student to recognize that the content and methodologies are contestable and that their study requires the toleration of uncertainty
- develop an awareness of how psychological research can be applied for the better understanding of human behaviour
- ensure that ethical practices are upheld in psychological inquiry
- develop an understanding of the biological, cognitive and sociocultural influences on human behaviour
- develop an understanding of alternative explanations of behavior
- understand and use diverse methods of psychological inquiry.

### II. Curriculum model overview

#### Psychology higher level

|                                |  |                  |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------|
| <i>Core</i>                    | 90 hours of instruction on three topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The biological level of analysis</li> <li>• The cognitive level of analysis</li> <li>• The sociocultural level of analysis</li> </ul>   | 90 hours         |
| <i>Options</i>                 | 30 hours of instruction on two additional topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abnormal psychology</li> <li>• Developmental psychology</li> <li>• Health psychology</li> <li>• Psychology of human relationships</li> <li>• Sport psychology</li> </ul> | 60 hours         |
| <i>Additional higher level</i> | Qualitative research in psychology   | 50 hours         |
| <i>Experimental study</i>      | Introduction to experimental research methodology  | 40 hours         |
| <b>Total teaching hours</b>    |  | <b>240 hours</b> |

## III. Assessment model

### Assessment for psychology higher level

The IB assesses student work as direct evidence of achievement against the stated goals of the Diploma Programme courses, which are to provide students with:

- a broad and balanced, yet academically demanding, programme of study
- the development of critical-thinking and reflective skills
- the development of research skills
- the development of independent learning skills
- the development of intercultural understanding
- a globally recognized university entrance qualification.

The assessments aim to test all students' knowledge and understanding of key concepts through various activities that demonstrate:

- knowledge and comprehension of specified content, research methods, theories, such as key concepts, biological, cognitive and sociocultural levels of analysis
- application and analysis, including using psychological research and psychological concepts to formulate an argument in response to a specific question
- synthesis and evaluation of psychological theories, empirical studies, and research methods used to investigate behaviour
- selection and use of skills appropriate to psychology, the acquisition of knowledge, skills required for experimental design, data collection and presentation, data analysis and interpretation
- data analysis using an appropriate inferential statistical test and write an organized response.

Students' success in the psychology higher level course is measured by combining their grades on external and internal assessment.

On external assessments, students must be able to demonstrate an understanding of both basic facts and complex concepts related to the biological, cognitive and sociocultural levels of analysis. Students in higher level courses are also assessed on their knowledge and understanding of qualitative research. For their internal assessment, psychology higher level students plan, undertake and report on a simple experimental study.

### Assessment at a glance

| Type of assessment  | Format of assessment   | Time (hours) | Weighting of final grade (%) |
|---------------------|--|--------------|------------------------------|
| <b>External</b>     |  |              | <b>80</b>                    |
| <i>Paper 1</i>      | Question response and an essay                                   | 2            | 35                           |
| <i>Paper 2</i>      | Answer 2 of 15 questions in essay form                           | 2            | 25                           |
| <i>Paper 3</i>      | Answer three questions   | 1            | 20                           |
| <b>Internal</b>     |  |              | <b>20</b>                    |
| <i>Study report</i> | A report of a simple experimental study conducted by the student |              |                              |

## IV. Sample questions

The following questions appeared in previous IB Diploma Programme psychology higher level examinations.\*

1. To what extent does genetic inheritance influence behaviour? Use relevant research studies in your response. (Paper 1)
2. Evaluate two research studies investigating the role of communication in maintaining relationships. (Paper 2)
3. The study outlined above uses the phrase "inductive content analysis". Explain the advantages and disadvantages of using this research strategy in the context of this specific study. (Paper 3, with regard to a supplied study)

\* the syllabus for examinations current until 2016

Learn more about how the IB Diploma Programme prepares students for success at university by going online to [www.ibo.org/universities](http://www.ibo.org/universities) or email us at [recognition@ibo.org](mailto:recognition@ibo.org).