



PSYCHOLOGY

ATAR course

**Year 12 syllabus – What’s changing: Rationale and Aims
For teaching in 2027**

Acknowledgement of Country

Kaya. The School Curriculum and Standards Authority (the Authority) acknowledges that our offices are on Whadjuk Noongar boodjar and that we deliver our services on the country of many traditional custodians and language groups throughout Western Australia. The Authority acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We offer our respect to Elders past and present.

Background

As part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Refreshment for reviewing the nomenclature of courses, the Authority has updated the rationale and aims of each syllabus.

The revised rationale and aims are aligned with the mapping of the general capabilities to provide clear connections between the rationale, aims and syllabus content. The rationale outlines what the subject is about and why it is important. It describes what students can expect to study in the course, along with the knowledge, skills and understandings they will develop throughout the course. It also explains how these can be applied in everyday life and references potential future pathways, outlining how students might connect what they learn in the course to further education, training and employment opportunities.

Important information

WACE Refreshment: Reviewing the nomenclature of courses

This document contains information that will be included in the syllabus effective from 1 January 2027.

Users of the syllabus are responsible for checking its currency.

Syllabuses are formally reviewed by the Authority on a cyclical basis, typically every five years.

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Rationale

The Psychology ATAR course deepens students' understanding of the scientific study of human cognition, emotions and behaviour. They study an evidence-based discipline that follows the principles of scientific inquiry to explore how people think, feel and behave, helping them understand themselves and others. By studying psychology, students gain knowledge of how mental processes and behaviours shape our daily lives, influencing interactions, decisions and social dynamics. This understanding is crucial for improving mental health, relationships, education and social environments.

Students examine components of cognitive psychology, including memory, learning, and theories like classical conditioning and operant conditioning. They will explore the roles of sensation, perception and attention in memory, and apply models to understand how the brain affects memory. The course also covers components of motivation, wellbeing, stress and sleep, teaching students to apply psychological theories and techniques to assess wellbeing. Students develop skills in evaluating scientific resources and learn how psychological knowledge evolves over time. They plan, design and conduct investigations while following ethical guidelines. Overall, the course emphasises the real-world application of psychological research to improve and develop themselves and their relationships, and to society as a whole.

Through the study of psychology, students develop the ability to critically evaluate psychological concepts, interpretations, claims and conclusions with reference to empirical evidence, enhancing their problem-solving and analytical skills. They acquire skills in designing and conducting psychological research, processing and interpreting data, and applying psychological principles to everyday life. Students also develop an understanding of ethical considerations and their importance to psychological practice.

Students develop the skills to apply their psychological knowledge to understand and explain their own thoughts, feelings and behaviours, as well as those of others. For example, they can use psychological principles to improve communication, manage stress or make more informed decisions in their personal and professional lives. The critical thinking and research skills developed in the course are valuable in addressing everyday challenges, from managing emotions and behaviour to resolving conflicts.

The skills and knowledge gained in the course are transferable to many fields, including health professions, education, human resources, social sciences, and business sectors like marketing and management. Students who pursue further education in psychology can delve deeper into specific areas such as clinical psychology, counselling or educational psychology. For those entering the workforce, the ability to understand human behaviour is essential in careers that involve working with people, such as in healthcare, social services, customer relations and leadership roles. The critical thinking, research and communication skills developed in this course provide a strong foundation for continued academic and professional development.

Aims

The Psychology ATAR course aims to develop students’:

- understanding that psychology is an evidence-based discipline following the principles of scientific inquiry
- skills to collect, process, evaluate and critically interpret information from a range of scientific sources
- understanding of theories and models of psychological concepts that exist simultaneously and continue to evolve
- ability to critically evaluate psychological concepts, interpretations, claims and conclusions with reference to empirical evidence
- knowledge, understandings and skills in familiar and unfamiliar contexts to explain thoughts, feelings and behaviours
- ability to design, conduct and evaluate practical science inquiry tasks relevant to psychological knowledge and understandings
- skills and processes to communicate their understanding of human behaviour to a range of audiences.