



Psychology General Course Year 12

Selected Unit 3 syllabus content for the Externally set task 2026

This document is an extract from the *Psychology General Course Year 12 syllabus*, featuring all of the content for Unit 3. The content that has been highlighted in the document is the content on which the Externally set task (EST) for 2026 will be based.

All students enrolled in the course are required to complete an EST. The EST is an assessment task which is set by the Authority and distributed to schools for administering to students. The EST will be administered in schools during Term 2, 2026 under standard test conditions. The EST will take 50 minutes.

The EST will be marked by teachers in each school using a marking key provided by the Authority. The EST is included in the assessment table in the syllabus as a separate assessment type with a weighting of 15% for the pair of units.

Unit 3

Unit description

This unit expands on personality theories studied in Unit 1 by introducing students to important theorists including Bandura, Pavlov and Skinner. Students apply knowledge and understandings to explore how personality can shape motivation and performance. An analysis of the use of personality testing by organisations is undertaken. Students are introduced to different states of consciousness and the role of sensation, perception and attention in organising and interpreting information. Factors which determine friendships and conflict resolution are explored. Students expand on their knowledge of ethics in psychological research by examining the role of deception in experiments. Key terminology, such as sample and populations, are defined and an understanding of experimental and control groups is acquired.

Unit content

An understanding of the Year 11 content is assumed knowledge for students in Year 12. It is recommended that students studying Unit 3 and Unit 4 have completed Unit 1 and Unit 2.

This unit includes the knowledge, understandings and skills described below.

Self

Personality

- personality theories
 - trait theories – Eysenck, Costa and McCrae
 - humanistic theories – Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Rogers
 - behaviourist theories – Pavlov, Watson, Thorndike, Skinner
 - social learning theory – Bandura
- the relationship between personality, motivation and human performance
- advantages, disadvantages and issues related to personality testing by organisations

Cognition

- definition of
 - cognition
 - sensation
 - perception
 - attention span
- memory
 - multi store model of memory – Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968)
 - sensory register – duration, capacity
 - working memory (short-term memory) – duration, capacity
 - long-term memory – duration, capacity, procedural memory, declarative memory – semantic and episodic
 - strategies for enhancing retrieval of information and improving memory
 - state and context dependent cues
 - mnemonics
 - chunking
 - repetition

- states of consciousness
 - selective attention
 - divided attention
 - daydreaming
 - meditation
 - hypnosis
 - sleep
- physiological indicators of consciousness
 - brainwaves
 - heart rate
 - galvanic skin response

Others

Relational influences

- friendship formation/determinants of liking
 - proximity
 - similarity
 - reciprocity
- types of relationships
 - pro-social
 - anti-social
- types of solutions to resolve conflict
 - imposed
 - distributive
 - integrative
- techniques for resolving conflict
 - mediation
 - negotiation
 - counselling

Communication

- communication styles
 - social background – Bernstein
 - gender differences – Tannen
 - Robinson’s social skills
- persuasive communication
 - source of the message
 - nature of the communication
 - characteristics of the audience

Research methods

Planning and conducting psychological research

- terminology
 - experimental, non-experimental
 - scientific, non-scientific
 - sample
 - population
- ethics in psychology research
 - participants' rights – confidentiality, voluntary participation, withdrawal rights
 - informed consent procedures
 - deception in research
- experimental research method
 - independent and dependent variables
 - operational hypotheses
 - controlled and uncontrolled variables
 - experimental and control groups
- non-experimental (descriptive) research methods
 - case studies, surveys, correlational studies
- qualitative methods for data collection
- objective quantitative measures in research
 - physiological measures
- subjective quantitative measures in research
 - checklists
 - rating scales – Likert scale

Processing and evaluating psychological research

- displaying quantitative data – tables, graphs, diagrams
- data interpretation
 - mode
 - mean
 - median
 - range
- use of correlation to establish association between variables
- statistical significance