

School administrators and Heads of Learning Area – Science and Teachers of Psychology ATAR Year 12 are requested to note for 2026 the following minor syllabus changes. The syllabus is labelled as 'For teaching from 2026'.

Psychology | ATAR Year 12 | Summary of minor syllabus changes for 2026

The content identified by ~~strikethrough~~ has been deleted from the syllabus and the content identified in *italics* has been revised in the syllabus for teaching from 2026.

Unit 3

Unit content

For designated studies in this unit (Craik and Tulving, 1975; Pavlov, 1902; Watson and Rayner, 1920; Thorndike, 1898; Skinner, ~~1948~~1938; Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1961), students should demonstrate an understanding of:

Psychological knowledge and understanding

Memory

- ~~the role of attention in memory~~
 - ~~selective and divided attention as seen in the Cocktail party effect (Cherry, 1953)~~
- models for explaining memory
 - features of the multi-store model of memory (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968)
 - sensory register: duration, capacity, encoding (*iconic and echoic*)
 - short-term memory: duration, capacity, encoding
 - long-term memory: duration, capacity, encoding
 - *implicit* – procedural
 - *explicit* (declarative) – semantic and episodic ~~memory~~
- process of ~~forgetting and~~ remembering *and forgetting*
 - remembering
 - the role of recall (free, serial and cued), recognition and re-learning in memory
 - levels of processing model of memory (Craik and Lockhart, 1972)
 - shallow (structural, phonemic) and deep (*semantic, elaboration*) processing
 - study: Depth of processing and the retention of words in episodic memory – *experiment two* (Craik and Tulving, 1975)

Learning

- theories of learning
 - classical conditioning
 - *reflex and learnt components* – neutral stimulus, unconditioned stimulus, unconditioned response, conditioned stimulus, conditioned response
 - *key principles* – *acquisition*, stimulus generalisation, discrimination, extinction and spontaneous recovery
- operant conditioning
 - schedules of reinforcement
 - *continuous*
 - *intermittent* – fixed, variable, interval and ratio
 - study: Law of effect (Thorndike, 1898)
 - study: *The Behaviour of Organisms* – Skinner box *experiments* (Skinner, ~~1948~~1938)
 - social learning theory – Bandura (1977)

- process of observational learning – attention, retention, reproduction, motivation, reinforcement

Science inquiry

Formulating research

- ~~develop a research question based on the aim/s~~
- identify variables – ~~independent, dependent, control, extraneous~~
 - *independent*
 - *dependent*
 - *control*
 - *extraneous – participant, environment, researcher*
 - *confounding*

Methodology

- types of research designs – application, method, strengths and limitations
 - experimental (control and experimental group) ~~and~~
 - *non-experimental*
 - *observational*
 - *case study*
 - *correlational*
 - *longitudinal*
 - *cross-sectional*
- ~~variables~~
 - ~~independent~~
 - ~~dependent~~
 - ~~control~~
 - ~~extraneous – participant, environment, researcher~~
 - ~~confounding~~
- sources and effects of extraneous variables and confounding variables
 - *placebo effect*
 - experimenter effect
 - demand characteristics
- minimise the effects of extraneous and confounding variables
 - random allocation of participants
 - *use of a placebo*
 - single-blind *and double-blind* procedures
 - standardisation of procedures and instructions

Data collection

- subjective measures – ~~checklists and~~ rating scales, such as Likert scales

Processing and analysing data

- graphs – scatterplot, ~~bar~~, column, line, histogram

Drawing conclusions

- evidence-based conclusions consistent with psychological evidence and relevant to the ~~research question~~ *hypothesis or inquiry question*

Evaluation of research

- application and use of the concept of validity as a measure of evaluating research
 - *internal validity*
 - *external validity*
- application and use of the concept of reliability as a measure of evaluating research
 - *test-retest reliability*
 - *inter-rater reliability*

Unit 4

Psychological knowledge and understanding

Motivation and wellbeing

- self-determination theory – Deci and Ryan (~~1985~~2000)
 - amotivation, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation
 - *self-determination continuum – regulatory styles*
 - psychological needs for motivation – autonomy, competence, relatedness
- models of wellbeing
 - subjective wellbeing – model of subjective wellbeing – Diener (1984)
 - key components – life satisfaction, affective balance (*positive and negative affect*)

Applications of psychology to health

- stressors
 - characteristics of stressors – ~~nature~~ *source (internal, external)*, duration (*acute, chronic*), strength/intensity
- models of stress
 - stress as a response – General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) model (Selye, 1936, 1983)
 - *characteristics of stages* – alarm (*shock, counter shock*), resistance, exhaustion
- sleep–wake cycle
 - *sleep as an example of a circadian rhythm*
 - ~~four~~ *three* stages of non-rapid eye movement (NREM) and *one stage* of rapid eye movement (REM)
 - characteristics – ~~sleep state~~, heart rate, eye movement, muscle tension, *brainwave patterns as measured by electroencephalography (EEG)*
- sleep deprivation
 - psychological and physiological effects of *acute partial* and chronic sleep deprivation
 - *acute partial* sleep deprivation – mood, attention, reflex speed, vision

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