VCE Psychology (Supporting Resources) EP Curriculum Map

Please note that EP does not currently provide all necessary resources to meet the current VCE Psychology study design. Any specific content that is not currently covered by EP is highlighted in yellow.

Unit 1: How are behaviour and mental processes shaped?

Content Descriptor	EP Lessons in Area of Study 1: What influences psychological development?
The complexity of psychological development • the interactive influences of hereditary and environmental factors on a person's psychological development • the biopsychosocial approach as a model for considering psychological development and mental wellbeing • the process of psychological development (emotional, cognitive and social development) over the course of the life span • the role of sensitive and critical periods in a person's psychological development **Defining and supporting psychological development** • the usefulness, and limitations, of psychological criteria to categorise behaviour as typical or atypical, including cultural perspectives, social norms, statistical rarity, personal distress and maladaptive behaviour • the concepts of normality and neurotypicality, including consideration of emotions, behaviours and cognitions that may be viewed as adaptive or maladaptive for an individual • normal variations of brain development within society, as illustrated by neurodiversity • the role of mental health workers, psychologists, psychiatrists and organisations in supporting psychological development and mental wellbeing as well as the diagnosis and management of atypical behaviour, including culturally responsive practices	• Introduction to Psychology • The Biopsychosocial Model • Timing of Experiences on Psychological Development • The impact of early abuse and deprivation • Piaget: Cognitive Developmental Theory • Vygotsky: Sociocultural Theory • Normality • Adaptive and Maladaptive Behaviours

Content Descriptor	EP Lessons in Area of Study 2: How are mental processes and behaviour influenced by the brain?
Role of the brain in mental processes and behaviour • different approaches over time in understanding the role of the brain in behaviour and mental processes • the roles of the hindbrain, midbrain and forebrain, including the cerebral cortex, in behaviour and mental processes **Brain plasticity and brain injury** • the capacity of the brain to change in response to experience and brain trauma, including factors influencing neuroplasticity and ways to maintain and/or maximise brain functioning • the impact of an acquired brain injury (ABI) on a person's biological, psychological and social functioning • the contribution of contemporary research to the understanding of neurological disorders • chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) as an example of emerging research into progressive and fatal brain disease	• The Cells of the Nervous System • Structure and Function of the Nervous System • Structure of the Brain • Developmental Plasticity • Adaptive Plasticity • Plasticity and the environment • Parkinson's Disease • Early Brain Investigative Techniques

Unit 2: How do internal and external factors influence behaviour and mental processes?

Content Descriptor	EP Lessons in Area of Study 1: How are people influenced to behave in particular ways?
Social cognition • the role of person perception, attributions, attitudes and stereotypes in interpreting, analysing, remembering and using information about the social world, including decision-making and interpersonal interactions • the avoidance of cognitive dissonance using cognitive biases • the positive and negative influences of heuristics as mechanisms for decision-making and problem-solving • the influence of prejudice, discrimination and stigma within society on a person's and/or group's mental wellbeing and ways to reduce it **Factors that influence individual and group behaviour** • the influence of social groups and culture on individual behaviour • the concepts of obedience and conformity and their relative influence on individual behaviour • positive and negative influences of different media sources on individual and group behaviour, such as changing nature of social connections, social comparison, addictive behaviours and information access • the development of independence and anti-conformity to empower individual decision-making when in groups	• Attitudes and Cognitive Dissonance • Attribution • Stereotypes & Tri-component Model of Attitudes • Prejudice & Discrimination • Social Differences: Sexism and Ageism • Group Influences on Behaviour • Groups, Status and Power • Historical Social-Psychological Research • Social Identity Theory • Prosocial Behaviour • Antisocial Behaviour • Aggression • Aggression and Media

Content Descriptor	EP Lessons in Area of Study 2: What influences a person's perception of the world?
Perception • the role of attention (sustained, divided, selective) in making sense of the world around us • the role of perception in the processing and interpretation of sensory information, as demonstrated through top-down and bottom-up processing • the influence of biological, psychological and social factors on visual perception and gustatory perception **Distortions of perception** • the fallibility of visual perceptual systems, for example, visual illusions and agnosia • the fallibility of gustatory perception, for example, supertasters, exposure to miraculin and the judgment of flavours • distortions of perception of taste and vision in healthy individuals, such as synaesthesia and spatial neglect	• Consciousness and Attention • Regulating Consciousness • Measuring Consciousness • Visual Perception • Biological influences on Visual Perception • Psychological influences: Perceptual set • Psychological Influences: Visual Perception Principles • Social Influences: Hudson (1960) - Pictorial Depth Perception in Sub-Cultural Groups in Africa • Social Influences: Deregowski (1972) - Pictorial Perception and Culture • Social Influences: Deregowski et al. (1972) - Pictorial Representation in a Remote Ethiopian Pop • Fallibility of Visual Perception

Unit 3: How does experience affect behaviour and mental processes?

Content Descriptor	EP Lessons in Area of Study 1: How does the nervous system enable psychological functioning?
Nervous system functioning • the roles of different subdivisions of the central and peripheral nervous systems in responding to, and processing and coordinating with, sensory stimuli received by the body to enable conscious and unconscious responses, including spinal reflexes • the role of neurotransmitters in the transmission of neural information across a neural synapse to produce excitatory effects (as with glutamate) or inhibitory effects (as with gamma-amino butyric acid [GABA]) as compared to neuromodulators (such as dopamine and serotonin) that have a range of effects on brain activity • synaptic plasticity – resulting from long-term potentiation and long-term depression, which together act to modify connections between neurons (sprouting, rerouting and pruning) – as the fundamental mechanism of memory formation that leads to learning **Stress as an example of a psychobiological process** • internal and external stressors causing psychological and physiological stress responses, including the flight-or-fight-or-freeze response in acute stress and the role of cortisol in chronic stress • the gut–brain axis (GBA) as an area of emerging research, with reference to the interaction of gut microbiota with stress and the nervous system in the control of psychological processes and behaviour • the explanatory power of Hans Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome as a biological model of stress, including alarm reaction (shock/counter shock), resistance and exhaustion • the explanatory power of Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping to explain stress as a psychological process (primary and secondary appraisal only) • use of strategies (approach and avoidance) for coping with stress and improving mental wellbeing, including context-specific effectiveness and coping flexibility	• Structure of the Central and Peripheral Nervous System • Spinal Reflex • Cerebral Cortex • Cognitive Appraisal • Language Processing • Voluntary Movement • Neurotransmission • Excitatory and Inhibitory Systems • Physical and Psychological Function of Various Chemicals • Emotion
Content Descriptor	**EP Lessons in Area of Study 2: How do people learn and remember?**

Approaches to understand learning • behaviourist approaches to learning, as illustrated by classical conditioning as a three-phase process (before conditioning, during conditioning and after conditioning) that results in the involuntary association between a neutral stimulus and unconditioned stimulus to produce a conditioned response, and operant conditioning as a three-phase process (antecedent, behaviour and consequence) involving reinforcement (positive and negative) and punishment (positive and negative) • social-cognitive approaches to learning, as illustrated by observational learning as a process involving attention, retention, reproduction, motivation and reinforcement • approaches to learning that situate the learner within a system, as illustrated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing where learning is viewed as being embedded in relationships where the learner is part of a multimodal system of knowledge patterned on Country **The psychobiological process of memory** • the explanatory power of the Atkinson-Shiffrin multi-store model of memory in the encoding, storage and retrieval of stored information in sensory, short-term and long-term memory stores • the roles of the hippocampus, amygdala, neocortex, basal ganglia and cerebellum in long-term implicit and explicit memories • the role of episodic and semantic memory in retrieving autobiographical events and in constructing possible imagined futures, including evidence from brain imaging and post-mortem studies of brain lesions in people with Alzheimer's disease and aphantasia as an example of individual differences in the experience of mental imagery • the use of mnemonics (acronyms, acrostics and the method of loci) by written cultures to increase the encoding, storage and retrieval of information as compared with the use of mnemonics such as sung narrative used by oral cultures, including Aboriginal peoples' use of songlines	• Classical Conditioning • Operant Conditioning • Social Learning Theory • Comparing Learning Theories • Neuroimaging Techniques • Introduction to Memory • Sensory Memory • Short-term Memory • Long-term Memory - Levels of Processing • Long-term Memory - Implicit and Explicit Memory • Hippocampus • Cerebellum • Types of retrieval • Memory Loss • Improving Memory • Alzheimer's Disease

Unit 4: How is mental wellbeing supported and maintained?

Content Descriptor	EP Lessons in Area of Study 1: How does sleep affect mental processes and behaviour?
The demand for sleep • sleep as a psychological construct that is broadly categorised as a naturally occurring altered state of consciousness and is further categorised into REM and NREM sleep, and the measurement of physiological responses associated with sleep, through electroencephalography (EEG), electromyography (EMG), electro-oculography (EOG), sleep diaries and video monitoring • regulation of sleep-wake patterns by internal biological mechanisms, with reference to circadian rhythm, ultradian rhythms of REM and NREM Stages 1–3, the suprachiasmatic nucleus and melatonin • differences in, and explanations for, the demands for sleep across the life span, with reference to total amount of sleep and changes in a typical pattern of sleep (proportion of REM and NREM) **Importance of sleep to mental wellbeing** • the effects of partial sleep deprivation (inadequate sleep either in quantity or quality) on a person's affective, behavioural and cognitive functioning, and the affective and cognitive effects of one night of full sleep deprivation as a comparison to blood alcohol concentration readings of 0.05 and 0.10 • changes to a person's sleep-wake cycle that cause circadian rhythm sleep disorders (Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome [DSPS], Advanced Sleep Phase Disorder [ASPD] and shift work) and the treatments of circadian rhythm sleep disorders through bright light therapy • improving sleep hygiene and adaptation to zeitgebers to improve sleep-wake patterns and mental wellbeing, with reference to daylight and blue light, temperature, and eating and drinking patterns	• Consciousness and Attention • Ultradian Rhythms and Stages of Sleep • Purpose of Sleep • Sleep-wake Shift in Adolescence • Sleep Deprivation • Sleep Disorders • Treatments and Interventions for Sleep Disorders

Content Descriptor	EP Lessons in Area of Study 2: What influences mental wellbeing?
Defining mental wellbeing • ways of considering mental wellbeing, including levels of functioning; resilience, as the ability to cope with and manage change and uncertainty; and social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), as a multidimensional and holistic framework for wellbeing that encapsulates all elements of being (body, mind and emotions, family and kinship, community, culture, country, spirituality and ancestors) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people • mental wellbeing as a continuum, with an individual's mental wellbeing influenced by the interaction of internal and external factors and fluctuating over time, as illustrated by variations for individuals experiencing stress, anxiety and phobia **Application of a biopsychosocial approach to explain specific phobia** • the relative influences of factors that contribute to the development of specific phobia, with reference to gamma-amino butyric acid (GABA) dysfunction and long-term potentiation (biological); behavioural models involving precipitation by classical conditioning and perpetuation by operant conditioning, and cognitive biases including memory bias and catastrophic thinking (psychological); and specific environmental triggers and stigma around seeking treatment (social) • evidence-based interventions and their use for specific phobia, with reference to the use of short-acting anti-anxiety benzodiazepine agents (GABA agonists) in the management of phobic anxiety and breathing retraining (biological); the use of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and systematic desensitisation as psychotherapeutic treatments of phobia (psychological); and psychoeducation for families/supporters with reference to challenging unrealistic or anxious thoughts and not encouraging avoidance behaviours (social) **Maintenance of mental wellbeing** • the application of a biopsychosocial approach to maintaining mental wellbeing, with reference to protective factors including adequate nutritional intake and hydration and sleep (biological), cognitive behavioural strategies and mindfulness meditation (psychological) and support from family, friends and community that is authentic and energising (social) • cultural determinants, including cultural continuity and self-determination, as integral for the maintenance of wellbeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	• Psychological Disorders • Diagnosing mental illness • Categories of Psychological Disorders • Anxiety Disorders and Phobias • Perceived Causes of Anxiety Disorders • Risk and Protective Factors • Biological Risk Factors • Psychological risk factors • Social Risk Factors • Cumulative Risk Factors • Stigma and Mental Health • The Biopsychosocial Model • Treatments of Psychological Disorders • Comparing Theories of Emotion • Happiness • Wellbeing and Happiness • Mindfulness