

Programme Specifications

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES TRIPOS

1	Awarding body	University of Cambridge
2	Teaching institution	University of Cambridge
3	Accreditation details	British Psychological Society
4	Name of final award	Bachelor of Arts
5	Programme title	Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Tripos
6	UCAS code	C800 BA/PBST
7	JACS code(s)	C800
8	Relevant QAA benchmark statement(s)	Psychology
9	Qualifications framework level	6 (Honours)
10	Date specification produced/ last revised	May 2014
11	Date specification last reviewed	May 2014

The Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Tripos at Cambridge provides the opportunity to study the core areas of psychology within the broader context of various cognate subjects.

Psychology has important connections to many other disciplines in the Biological Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, and has important applications in a number of different areas ranging from Medicine and Psychiatry to Criminology and Economics. The Psychological and Behavioural Sciences Tripos offers a broad and flexible course covering all aspects of psychology, for example: Perception, cognition, the development of social behaviour, psychopathology, language, brain mechanisms, gender, family relationships and influences, personality, and group social behaviour. In the final year, students can pursue the topics that interest them most through engaging with the ongoing research of the Department through project and dissertation work.

Students are taught by lecturers and researchers of international excellence from the Department of Psychology along with colleagues from other parts of the Natural & Social Sciences and the Humanities. Subject societies and seminar programmes also offer regular talks from guest speakers.

In addition to academic expertise, students have access to the Department of Psychology library, and the Social and Political Sciences library (which holds a large Psychology collection). Together these libraries hold around 50,000 books and over 150 periodicals along with other resources and computing facilities.

The course is accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS), and students who successfully graduate (with at least second class honours, and a pass mark in their final year empirical research dissertation) achieve the 'graduate basis for chartered membership' which allows them to join the Society and pursue a career in psychology.

Programme structure

Year 1 (Part I)

In Part I, students take a total of four papers: the two from Section A which are compulsory and two chosen from the list in Section B.

Section A

- PBS1: Introduction to Psychology
- PBS2: Psychological Enquiry and Methods (this subject includes practical demonstrations and exercises)

Section B

The list of papers available may vary from year to year but examples include:

- Humans in Biological Perspective
- Language, Communication, and Literacy
- Evolution and Behaviour
- Analysis of Politics
- Introduction to Computer Science
- Introduction to Sociology: Modern Societies
- The Development of Human Society
- Human Societies: the Comparative Perspective
- Metaphysics and Philosophy of Mind

At the end of the year, students sit a three-hour written examination in each of the four papers.

Year 2 (Part IIA)

In Part IIA students also take 4 papers. This year provides a foundation for the research-led teaching of the final year while also allowing students to begin to specialise in those areas that interest them.

All students take the Social & Developmental Psychology paper as well as an optional paper from a range of around 15 available. The list of optional papers may vary from year to year but will typically include papers in:

- Biological Anthropology
- History and Philosophy of Science
- Neurobiology
- Social Anthropology
- Sociology
- Philosophy

For the remaining two papers, students can take either:

- Biological and Cognitive Psychology, plus a further optional paper
- or
- Experimental Psychology, and undertake a research skills project (assessed by submission of a long essay of up to 5,000 words)

Experimental Psychology involves laboratory work. With the exception of the research skills project, students sit a written exam in each paper at the end of the year.

Any candidate who has not previously completed Part I must, except with the permission of the Committee of Management, offer PBS 1 and PBS 2 as their optional papers if he or she has not previously taken these papers within another Tripos.

Year 3 (Part IIB)

In the final year, students undertake a research dissertation of between 6,000 and 10,000 words on a psychology topic of their choice. They also choose a further three papers from a selection available, each of which is assessed by a written examination.

The list of papers may vary from year to year but will typically include papers in:

- Development and Psychopathology
- Experimental Psychology
- Cognitive Neuroscience
- Psychology and Social Issues
- Gender development
- The Family
- Biological Anthropology
- Sociology
- Criminology
- Philosophy

A list of Optional papers for each part of the Tripos will be published in the preceding Easter term.

Learning outcomes

The institutions responsible for each paper option within the Tripos will have identified aims, learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods.

The course aims to:

- provide an education in psychological and behavioural sciences of the highest calibre in order to produce graduates of the quality sought by industry, the professions, and the public service, and to provide academic teachers and researchers for the future;
- provide students with knowledge and skills in social, developmental, biological and experimental psychology within the broader context of the behavioural sciences appropriate to future professional work;
- encourage students to develop a critical approach to their studies, evaluating theory and evidence accordingly;
- allow students to develop specialised knowledge and research skills in one or more subjects, by studying these in depth if they so choose, equipping them with skills to communicate effectively in written and numerical forms;
- produce graduates who can think independently and are capable of applying their knowledge and skills effectively and with integrity;
- provide an intellectually stimulating environment in which students have the opportunity to fulfil their potential;
- provide a course which is attractive to outstanding students from all backgrounds;
- provide full coverage of all material to meet the standards of the British Psychological Society as providing the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership of the society for a student who completes the Tripos with at least second class honours.

Teaching methods

Each course employs a variety of teaching and learning methods, including lectures, classes, seminars, and supervisions. Some papers include a practical element, which takes place in laboratories.

Assessment methods

The individual courses employ a range of assessment techniques, including unseen written examinations, assessed coursework, literature and experimental reports, marked essays, oral examinations and project reports and presentations. Examiners are appointed

separately for each course. In each year of the course, examiners award marks and classes based on marking criteria approved by the relevant course organisers and Faculty Board.

The marks for each course are moderated to ensure a fair and comparable distribution of marks is achieved across each subject. Students are awarded a class based on the aggregate mark of the subjects taken, with the proviso that no candidate who fails to achieve a pass mark on their Research Dissertation in Part IIB will be awarded higher than a third class honours in that part of the Tripos.

Entry and/or progression requirements

Typical offers from Colleges would be three GCE A2-levels at grade A*AA/IB 40–41 points, with 776 or 777 at Higher Level. Some Colleges have specific entry requirements and applicants should check the relevant College website for details.

Student support

All students are members of a College as well as the Department and have access to learning support from both College and University. Each part of the course is overseen by a course organiser who takes overall responsibility for the running of the course and, in conjunction with college Directors of Studies, gives advice to students on planning the year's work. Students can typically expect two lectures a week for each paper. Students typically write 6 supervision essays per paper each year, although the supervision schedule may vary across disciplines.

Students can normally expect regular informal contact, and at least 4 formal hours of supervision, for their Research Dissertation.

Graduate employability and career destinations

This course equips students with skills and knowledge of value in numerous professional sectors. Many students pursue further study and research, and graduates are eligible for admission to professional courses in clinical, educational, forensic, or applied psychology. Numerous past students of psychology at Cambridge have gone on to prominent positions in psychology and related fields throughout the world. Other recent graduates have entered careers in the media, management, the Civil Service, finance, law and business.

The Careers Service maintains links with relevant employers and takes into account employer needs and opinions in the services which it provides for students. The Careers Service also allocates a Careers Adviser to each College, faculty and department to act as a point of contact.

Preparation for employment is provided in the opportunities for acquisition of relevant skills.

Management of teaching quality and standards

- 1 The institutions that contribute to this course participate in the University's quality assurance and enhancement system. Approval by the General Board's Education Committee is required before any significant changes to courses are made. All Learning and Teaching activities, included in this course, are subject to review by the University's General Board. A Learning and Teaching Review of Psychology teaching took place in January 2012.
- 2 Students will be invited to comment on the course both formally and informally. Questionnaires are circulated mid-way through and at the end of each module or lecture course. Anonymous responses are collated and discussed at Departmental meetings and forwarded to the PBST Management Committee for analysis and action as necessary. Student representatives nominated for each course, represent the interests of students

on the PBST Management Committee and the Department of Psychology Staff/Student Committee.

Quality indicators

The Department of Psychology is celebrated for its teaching; students are taught by researchers of international excellence and many of its past students have gone on to prominent positions in psychology and related fields throughout the world.

A predecessor to the current Department (the former Department of Experimental Psychology) was given the highest score in the last Research Assessment Exercise conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2008.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this programme specification. At the time of publication, the programme specification has been approved by the relevant Faculty Board (or equivalent). Programme specifications are reviewed annually, however, during the course of the academical year, any approved changes to the programme will be communicated to enrolled students through email notification or publication in the Reporter. The relevant faculty or department will endeavour to update the programme specification accordingly, and prior to the start of the next academical year.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for all awards of the University is available online at: www.admin.cam.ac.uk/univ/camdata/archive.html