

GAC029 Psychology II: Introduction to Psychology

GAC Psychology

What this module is, and how it is marked

GAC029 introduces psychology as an academic subject: its history and principles, then emotion and personality, sensation and perception, and the biology of behaviour.

Assessment includes a **psychological experiment** 心理学实验 you conduct and report, a test, and coursework. The experiment is assessed on method, not on whether the result matched the textbook.

- **△ Definitions are precise here, and the precision is examinable.** Sensation is not perception. Correlation is not causation. Most lost marks come from a term used loosely, not from material never studied.

What is psychology

- **Psychology** 心理学 is the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. The word *scientific* is doing work: claims rest on evidence gathered systematically.
- The field's **perspectives** 视角 — biological, behavioural, cognitive, humanistic, psychodynamic — explain the same behaviour differently, and a question naming one expects that one.
- **Research methods** 研究方法 here mean the experiment: an **independent variable** the researcher changes, a **dependent variable** measured, and everything else controlled.
- **Ethics** 伦理 in psychology are strict: informed consent, no harm, the right to withdraw, debriefing afterwards.

Worked example. Does music affect memory?

Independent: music or silence. Dependent: words recalled from a list of twenty. Controls: same list, same time limit, same room. Design: each participant does both conditions, with the order swapped for half of them so practice does not favour one condition.

That last sentence is **counterbalancing** 平衡设计, and including it is what turns a demonstration into an experiment.

Emotions and personality

- An **emotion** 情绪 has three parts: a physiological change, an expression, and a subjective feeling.
- Theories differ on the order. Does the body respond first and the feeling follow, or the reverse? Naming the theory is the marked step.
- **Personality** 人格 is a person's stable pattern of thinking, feeling and behaving.
- **Trait theories** 特质理论 describe personality along dimensions; **learning approaches** 学习取向 explain it as the result of experience. GAC029 emphasises the second.

Sensation and perception

- **Sensation** 感觉 is the detection of a stimulus by a sense organ. **Perception** 知觉 is the brain's interpretation of it.
- The distinction is the most examined thing in the unit: the eye senses light, the brain perceives a face.
- **Absolute threshold** 绝对阈限 is the smallest detectable stimulus; the **difference threshold** 差别阈限 is the smallest change you can notice.
- **Perceptual constancy** 知觉恒常性 keeps an object looking the same size and colour as conditions change — which is why an illusion works: it exploits a rule the brain applies correctly almost always.

The biology of behaviour

- A **neuron** 神经元 receives at its dendrites, fires along its axon, and passes a signal across a **synapse** 突触 using **neurotransmitters** 神经递质.
- The **central nervous system** 中枢神经系统 is the brain and spinal cord; the **peripheral nervous system** 周围神经系统 is everything else.
- The **cerebral cortex** 大脑皮层 has four lobes, and each is associated with characteristic functions.
- **Sleep** 睡眠 runs in cycles of about ninety minutes, and **REM sleep** 快速眼动睡眠 is where most vivid dreaming happens.
- **△** Say “is associated with”, not “controls”. Brain regions work together, and a question that offers “the amygdala controls fear” is usually testing exactly that overstatement.