Course notes

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Psychology · HL

IB psychology, course first assessed 2027

Content: biological, cognitive and sociocultural approaches; six concepts; four contexts that all students study (no options). Class practicals use four methods; the internal assessment is a research proposal. HL adds two extensions (culture, motivation and technology; data analysis and interpretation), assessed in Paper 3.

SL: Paper 1 1.5 h 35%, Paper 2 1.5 h 35%, research proposal (internal assessment, 24 marks) 30%. HL: Paper 1 1.5 h 25%, Paper 2 1.5 h 25%, Paper 3 1.75 h 30% (data analysis on one HL extension), research proposal 20%.

Biological and cognitive approaches · Explanations, studies and inference

Biological explanations examine physiological processes; cognitive explanations examine processes such as memory and attention.

A study tests a bounded claim through a method, sample and measurement; it does not prove an entire approach.

> ■ **Checked example**
>
> An observational sleep-memory relation might also reflect stress, prior ability or study time.
> An ethically approved experiment can control some factors, but its task and sample still limit generalization.

■ Limits and practice

Do not invent a published study or claim the original classroom scenario is one.

Add accurate aims, procedure, findings and evaluation for the teacher's selected studies before using them as examination evidence.

What can be concluded from the association alone?

Answer: Longer sleep is associated with higher scores in this sample, without establishing causation.

Sociocultural approach; contexts · Culture, social learning and application

Social learning involves learning through observing others and the consequences of their actions.

Sociocultural analysis examines social and cultural context; variation within a group

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matters as well as differences between groups.

> ■ **Checked example**
>
> In the original classroom case, identify the model, observed behaviour and praise before explaining possible imitation.
> To apply this to learning and cognition, use an actual study such as Bandura (1961) and explain the limits of transferring its evidence.

■ **Limits and practice**

Do not treat national identity as a complete explanation of behaviour.

All students study the four contexts (health and well-being, human development, human relationships, learning and cognition); there are no options in this course.

Which detail most directly supports a social-learning explanation?

Answer: The learner observes both a model's strategy and the praise that follows.

Research methods; research proposal · Ethical design, data and evaluation

The independent variable is deliberately changed; the dependent variable is measured.

Controls, standardized instructions, consent and withdrawal protect both participants and interpretation.

> ■ **Checked example**
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> Compare two approved presentation formats using a justified allocation method. Record recall consistently and retain anonymized raw data.
> In a class practical, describe the design before choosing suitable descriptive analysis with the teacher.

■ **Limits and practice**

Avoid deception, sensitive topics and unsupported statistical claims. Class practicals use four methods: an experiment, an interview or focus group, an observation and a questionnaire.

The internal assessment is a research proposal: it plans a study for a population of interest but does not collect data.

Which variable is the dependent variable in this task?

Answer: The measured recall score.

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HL extensions; data analysis · Evaluating qualitative and quantitative research

Qualitative research examines meanings and experiences; quantitative research measures variables numerically.

Evaluate each method against its question, sampling, analytic process and ethical obligations.

■ Checked example

An interview may reveal how people interpret an experience, but volunteer recruitment can shape whose perspectives appear.
Compare themes with quoted evidence and reflect on the researcher's role, rather than judging credibility only by sample size.

■ Limits and practice

Paper 3 gives four to six sources on one HL extension topic; read the data before judging a claim.

Do not apply experimental cause-and-effect standards indiscriminately to an inquiry about lived meanings.

What is a useful evaluation of the interview study?

Answer: Whether recruitment and analysis support its claims about the participants' experiences.

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