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CATS University Foundation Programme

Psychology Specification

Going further than others

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UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION PROGRAMME

Going further than others

CATS UFP is a Level 3 course, designed to help international students to move successfully from high school to a UK University. It does this by using a variety of assessment methods that are common in UK Universities, such as portfolios, presentations academic posters, and examinations combined with content specifically designed to build on prior learning from courses around the world. While English for Academic purposes is an essential part of CATS UFP, and all students will take an English course, assessment design within each module focuses on subject knowledge and skills, rather than the ability to cope with English as a second language.

CATS UFP is delivered over nine months (sometimes six, for students on specific visas, used to a rigorous style of study and excellent English), within a pastorally supportive and culturally stimulating context that enables students' learning to prosper. It does this by providing a variety of routes to the qualification, taught by expert staff and with time to develop English and learn about British culture. CATS UFP is only available to centres with excellent pastoral care. Centres provide a stimulating intellectual and cultural environment with small classes. Thus, enabling the best learning to happen. With CATS UFP, all learning happens with teachers who are expert in creating a positive learning environment for students from a wide range of countries.

CATS UFP has a successful record of accomplishment and is highly respected by UK universities. With this qualification, students with 12 years of schooling from their own country can make the progression that they want, to a wide range of UK universities, including those ranked most highly for both research and teaching. CATS UFP has strong advocates in its alumni, who display what a CATS UFP qualification can give them. Graduates report that they feel very well prepared for university study; often, better prepared than students from other Level 3 programmes. Universities have confirmed this, through testimonials and through extensive consultation with university based External Examiners it has gained excellent credibility with UK universities.

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INTRODUCTION: Why Choose Psychology UFP?

Dynamic and engaging content.
For over 30 years CATS UFP has provided a high quality, successful qualification. . The qualification is continually improved through teacher and student feedback, operational experience and by working closely with universities and the wider academic community. By taking a comprehensive approach to the subject, we demonstrate the interrelated nature of psychology using psychological models, studies, and theories to support analysis of contemporary psychological issues and situations to provide a dynamic specification. The content is designed to provide students with foundational ideas in psychological study and at the same time engage them with contemporary issues and debates in psychology.

Sensitivity towards international students.
The Psychology UFP course has been designed to take into account the challenges that international students will face when studying a British qualification. Coursework and assessments are tailor made to ensure students can fulfil their ultimate potential.

Real life skills to support university study.
University education encourages independent study and self-driven learning. Therefore, students are encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of a topic which genuinely interest them through the coursework offering. By completing the coursework, students are challenged to manage their time well, and to realise their capacity to learn and excel on their own, while becoming empowered to use various sources of learning to expand their knowledge base. On completing the coursework students will share their learning with their classmates in a setting, simulating a research conference. This will provide them the opportunity to communicate their contributions clearly and concisely to an audience of their peers. They will also have a chance to respond to questions and feedback, will have a chance to respond to questions and feedback. In this way, students experience a sense of ownership of their contribution to their academic community which may motivate them to take on more learning challenges in the future.

Students will develop their understanding in a broad range of psychological concepts, theories, and approaches, which can be applied to real life. They will also develop the knowledge and skills to analyse, evaluate contemporary psychological issues, and draw appropriate conclusions from these. Additionally, in preparation for higher education, students also develop transferrable skills of self-driven study, time-management, cultural competence, and enhanced self-awareness.

Key Academic skills development.
Psychology as a subject relies heavily on scientific research, therefor studying psychology allows students to develop a range of academic and research skills. Students will become adept at breaking down problems into manageable components, developing

hypotheses and devising strategies to test their ideas. Students also develop the communications skills needed in both academic and professional settings. Students will learn to express their ideas clearly and coherently, through both written and verbal communication, doing presentations and taking part in class discussions. Students will also make decisions about research design and work with both qualitative and quantitative research data, which prepare them for further studies in science.

Our examination papers use a variety of assessment styles including short answer, multiple choice, essay, data-response, and case studies to engage students and to improve their confidence with assessments. Real life case studies from around the world are used to make the subject more accessible for international students and to enable them to relate to and apply knowledge and skills developed throughout the course.

Success through a wide range of assessment methods.
UFP Psychology involves a blended learning approach, which enables students to gradually become more confident and independent learners. To this end, different types of assessments, enable active and engaged students to demonstrate a wide range of skills and abilities successfully. There are several different methods of assessment: multiple-choice tests on topic knowledge, coursework, presentation, leading a discussion on a peer-reviewed article, and a final controlled assessment.

Coursework rather than one final examination.
The aim of coursework assignments is to engage students with contemporary and salient topics in psychology while providing them with different ways of demonstrating the key skills required for future university studies. The coursework also gives students the opportunity to learn how to effectively analyse and evaluate selected research papers and then show their ability to prepare the appropriate level and quantity of research assessment pieces.

The first coursework is a research portfolio, in which students complete an annotated bibliography on two articles and a reflection. This develops their skills in analysing academic literature, evaluating research, and applying findings to their understanding of psychology.

The second coursework is an individual presentation focusing on a psychological theory, study, or research method from Module 1. Students also include a brief critical reflection on the use of AI in academic work. The knowledge and skills gained in both coursework tasks support students' preparation for the final written exam, where they apply and evaluate psychological theories and studies under controlled conditions.

Continuous Assessment to support progress.
One of the aims of university study is to build up a broad base of domain knowledge on a subject. To support the learning that this type of knowledge building requires, students on this course are given several small multiple-choice tests at the end of topics. This provides

students the opportunity to hone their own study skills of organising their knowledge, repeated practice and recall practice. As this
assessment is continuous throughout the year; students can give an account of smaller chunks of information that they have mastered. Furthermore, the continuous assessment also provides students a record of their own learning and performance which more reliably inform their predicted grades over time.

Final Exam to highlight proficiency.
Students are given the opportunity to apply and demonstrate the skills and thinking they have developed throughout the year in a final exam. This exam includes elements of a controlled assessment, as students are allowed to bring in their own notes. This synoptic assessment draws on all topics covered in the specification, allowing students to show the breadth and depth of the connections they have made across the course.

Aims of the Course

UFP Psychology follows recommendations from our partner universities to encourage students to:

- develop an enthusiasm for studying psychology and using the scientific method to find answers to complex problems.
- develop an understanding of psychological concepts and theories and apply these to real life examples.
- improve accuracy, orderliness, and the ability to think logically and develop clear lines of argument to explain psychological issues.
- select, interpret, and use appropriate data from various sources.
- analyse and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to understanding human behaviour.
- develop a critical approach to psychological and methods of enquiry.
- evaluate and make judgements related to different psychological situations based on the knowledge learned and case studies read.

Key Academic Skills

Students taking this course will be encouraged to develop as independent learners with the ability to think critically. Student will also be guided to engage effectively with relevant and reliable sources of academic literature which will enable them to attempt basic primary research and present their findings through written work and presentations:

Ethical reasoning

Students will:

- understand the vital role which ethics play in psychology due to its potential impact on individuals and communities.
- demonstrate ethical considerations in research, practice, and the application of psychological principles.
- be familiar with the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines of respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity.
- consider ethics as the first step in any proposed practical research

Reasoning and critical thinking

Students will:

- think analytically to identify relevant and reliable sources of psychological information
- develop problem-solving skills by questioning assumptions and considering different approaches to address issues in human behaviour.
- select, organise, and communicate relevant information in a variety of forms.

- apply mathematical and basic statistical methods to investigating psychological concepts.
- analyse and evaluate concepts, theories, and research critically, by questioning assumptions.
- be able to identify strengths and weaknesses in arguments and draw well-reasoned conclusions based on evidence.

Independent learning

Students will:

- identify an area of interest that promotes self-driven learning.
- become adept at finding and choosing appropriate resources to support own learning.
- organise own learning through management of time and material.
- work on own initiative to prioritise tasks.
- work independently to support understanding of material.
- give an account of the outcomes of a self-directed learning task.
- share learning and findings with an audience of peers.
- deal effectively with feedback, discussion, and questions about their topic of expertise.

Research skills

Students will:

- take a critical reading approach to locate, understand, and evaluate peer-reviewed journal articles and empirical studies to inform their own learning.
- research an area of interest and design a small practical study to generate data to answer contemporary research question.
- develop their academic integrity and learn to acknowledge the work of others, how to do effective referencing and avoid plagiarism.
- use technology effectively to support their own learning, communication, and collaboration with others.

Presentation and Communication skills

Students will:

- develop a systematic approach to organise their reading for use in their studies and writing.
- practice academic conventions in longer written work.
- be able to draft psychological research report.
- organise information clearly and coherently, using specialist vocabulary as appropriate.
- practice verbal and non-verbal communication skills in presentation work.

ASSUMED PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

The UFP Psychology course is built on the assumption that students have not studied psychology before. However, it is recommended that students have competence in certain cognitive, language and quantitative skills to be able to:

- read and comprehend extended texts in English.
- write extended, coherent texts in English.
  - use basic understandings of data handling such as
  - the use of ratios, fractions, and percentages
  - mathematical symbols
  - significant figures
  - construct and interpret a range of standard graphical forms.
  - use of formulae to analyse data.
- interpret, apply, and analyse information in written, graphical, and numerical forms.
- show willingness to learn new skills and academic conventions.
- show willingness to consider different views.

Any prior learning in psychology or the sciences may be beneficial in enabling students to be able to grasp concepts quickly and in depth. For example, those who have joined the UFP route from an international system which uses the IB or IGCSE syllabi, may have taken science or sociology at a Key Stage 4 level which may cover topics such as theory and methods, the structure of the nervous system, experimental skills, data handling techniques and socialisation.

The table below shows prior learning in Psychology in a selection of national systems:

China	• No equivalent subject in national high schools
Malaysia	• No equivalent subject in national high school
UAE	• History, Geography, Economics, and Social Studies has been combined into 1 subject since 2016. Students study Psychology on the UAE Social Studies Programme when they are in grade 12. Topics that are relevant to the UFP Psychology specification include: • The growth and development of psychology and its relationships to other disciplines. • Learning theories and their role in behaviour modification. Students also develop the following relevant skills: • Competence in collecting and evaluating sources and in using evidence that supports his/her opinions and positions. • The ability to use technology and other sources to collect data and information on different topics. • The ability to cooperate with others to know more about the content and concepts related to main topics.

	• The ability to prepare explanations and opinions for discussion, reach conclusions and critique them. • About 40% of pupils attend private schools which are internationally accredited, using international syllabi including iGCSEs which contain some reference to psychological topics, such as theory and methods.
Russia	• At Year 10 and 11, the subject of" Social Sciences" may also include psychology, alongside Foreign Languages, Russian History, World History, Economic and Social Geography, Law, and Political Science.
Kazakhstan	• No equivalent subject in national high schools
Nigeria	• In Social Studies, the topics related to Psychology include: • Self-identity. • Socialisation and our social environment. • Education and Social Change
South Africa	• No equivalent subject in national high schools.
Brazil	• No equivalent subject in national high schools.
Mexico	• No equivalent subject in national high schools.

Subject Content

Module 1.	
Foundations in Psychology	This module introduces some of the foundational ideas used to study, describe and predict human behaviour: - Overview & Approaches: understand the different perspectives taken to describe, predict and change human behaviour. - Research Methods: understand how psychological research is planned, conducted, and analysed using scientific methods - Social Psychology: understand how social influence can lead to individual changes and consequent impacts on society. - Cognitive psychology: Understand how memory works and exploring the factors that lead to the reconstruction of memory, attention and forgetting. - Biological Psychology: understanding some of the basic biopsychological processes which underlie human behaviour.

Module 2.	
Applications of Psychology	In this module, student engage with several areas in which psychological knowledge can be applied to support and change human behaviour: - Aggression: understand some of the factors, mechanisms, and theories that underly aggressive behaviour - Relationships: understand some of the factors affecting attraction, theories of romantic relationships in virtual and parasocial relationships. - Psychopathology: understand how psychologists diagnose mental disorders, exploring the factors influencing the diagnosis of mental disorders. Examining the theories and treatments of one mental disorder. - Debates and Issues: understand some of the important arguments that can be used to make broad judgements on psychological theory, methodology and research.

Directed Learning Hours

The guide below sets out the **directed learning hours.** This means the hours students will spend in lessons, with the teacher crafting the learning goals, content and guide the learning processes. For these hours, teachers can also require students to do preparation activities, such as pre-reading, preparing presentations or leading discussion groups as homework, to contribute to lesson time. The directed learning hours include provision for guiding students with regards to the academic skills needed to complete coursework.

It is recommended that to do well in this course, students match the number of hours they spend in lessons with **independent study.** This would mean that for every one hour in lesson, the student spends at least one hour on self-driven activities which support their in-lesson learning. This may include pre- or further reading, watching videos to understand the concepts, making notes, memorising terms, or spaced practice, or working on coursework.

Detailed Content List

Module 1.	Foundations in Psychology	
1.1 Overview and Approaches (20 hours)	□ Introduction to Psychology □ Ethical issues and guidelines □ Behaviorism □ Social Learning Theory □ Psychodynamic approach □ Humanism □ Comparison of Approaches	Students must be able to - explain the main ideas and classical studies/theories within the approaches. - compare and contrast approaches with each other.
1.2 Research Methods (20 hours)	□ Sampling □ Self-reporting data: Questionaries & interviews □ Quantitative data and analysis □ Researcher effects □ Validity and reliability □ Qualitative data and thematic analysis □ Format of a research report □ Experiments & Experimental design □ Hypothesis testing □ Internal and Ecological validity □ Case studies □ Correlation □ Twin and Adoption studies □ Observations □ Animal studies and ethics.	Student must be able to - define the research terms. - identify and apply research methods in case studies and peer reviewed psychological literature. - evaluate (know the strengths and weaknesses) of the research methods. - use their knowledge of research methods to design and write a research proposal for

		their own proposed study and in the controlled assessment.
1.3 Social Psychology (15 hours)	**Obedience** Agency Theory Social Impact theory • Factors affecting obedience: individual differences, situation, and culture Studies: Milgram Base (1963) & Variations Study: Burger (2009) **Prejudice** Social identity theory Realistic conflict theory • Factors affecting prejudice: individual differences, situation, and culture Study: Sherrif et al (1954/1961)	Students should be able to define, describe, apply, and evaluate theories and studies in social psychology. Students should be able to describe all studies in the format of - Aim - Method/Procedures - Findings - Conclusion
1.4 Cognitive Psychology (15 hours)	**Memory** Working Memory Model Multi-store memory model Study: Baddeley (1966b) **Long-term and Reconstructive memory** Explanations of LTM Explanation of Reconstructive memory Study: Bartlett War of the Ghosts (1932) **Other studies in cognitive psychology** Schmolk et al (2002) Steyvers and Hemmer (2012) Sebastian Hernandez-Gil (2012)	Students should be able to define, describe, apply, and evaluate theories in cognitive psychology. Students should be able to describe all studies in the format of - Aim - Method/Procedures - Findings - Conclusion
1.5 Biopsychology (15 hours)	Nervous and endocrine system Neurons and synaptic transmission Localisation of function in the brain Study: Phineas Gage (1984/1994) Plasticity	Students should be able to define and explain the concepts in this module.

	- Functional recovery after trauma - Ways to study the brain - Biological rhythms: circadian and infradian Endogenous pacemakers and zeitgebers	

Module 2.	Applications of Psychology	
2.1 Aggression (15 hours)	**Biological explanations** - Neural and hormonal mechanisms - Genetic factors **Social psychological explanations:** - Frustration-aggression hypothesis - Social learning theory - Deindividuation **Real world Applications:** - Media Influences • Desensitization, disinhibition, and priming	Students must be able to describe, apply or evaluate the theories of aggression. - Students should be able to discuss the real-world applications of aggression.
2.2 Relationships (15 hours)	**Factors affecting attraction** - Evolutionary explanations - Self-disclosure - Physical attractiveness - Filter theory **Theories of romantic relationships** - Social exchange theory - Equity theory - Rusbuldt's investment model - Duck's phase model **Real world Applications** - Virtual relationships in social media - Parasocial relationships	Students must be able to describe, apply or evaluate the theories of relationships. Students should be able to discuss the real-world applications of relationship theories.
2.3 Psychopathology (15 Hours)	- Definitions of Abnormality - Study: Rosenhan (1973) On being sane in insane places. - Culture specific psychology pathologies (e.g., Koro, Taijin Kyofusho) - Phobias, Behavioural explanation and treatment of phobias	Students must be able to describe, apply and evaluate the key concepts and theories in psychopathology. Students must be able to evaluate Rosenhan's study.

	• Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), Biological explanations and treatment of OCD.	
2.4 Debates & Issues (10 hours)	• Gender and culture • Free will and determinism • Nature and nurture • Holism and Reductionism • Ethics and social sensitive research • Comparison of Approaches	Students need to understand and explain the key concepts and arguments. Students should be able to apply the knowledge of this unit to discuss to evaluate theories, studies, and case studies in psychology.

NB. The remaining guided learning hours will be used for coursework preparation.
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Assessment Overview

Assessment Objectives

Assessment Objectives* (AOs) are designed for Level 3 Psychology specifications. The Psychology UFP will place a stronger emphasis on Psychology in an international context, compared to other Level three qualifications.

	Objective	Weighting
AO1	Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes, techniques, and procedures.	30-35%
AO2	Apply knowledge and understanding of psychological ideas, processes, techniques and procedures in a theoretical context, practical context and when different types of handling data.	25-30%
AO3	Analyse, interpret and evaluate psychological information, ideas, and evidence about psychological issues, to make judgements and reach conclusions and develop and refine practical design and procedures.	30-35%
AO4	Communicate (verbal and written) explanations and evaluations in a clear and structured manner, making use of a range of relevant evidence, appropriate vocabulary, and references. Proper academic conventions are used where appropriate.	10-15%

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES WEIGHTING (AGAINST EACH COMPONENT)

Assessment Objectives	Coursework 1 Research Portfolio	Coursework 2 Individual Presentation	Topic Tests Four end of topic tests on Digi-exam	Final Exam (Controlled Assessment)	Weighting
COURSE WEIGHTING	**20%**	**20%**	**20%**	**40%**	
AO1	30%	25%	45%	25%	**30-35%**
AO2	25%	27.5%	27.5%	25%	**25-30%**
AO3	30%	27.5%	27.5%	35%	**30-35%**
AO4	15%	20%	0%	15%	**10-15%**

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ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE

Element	Objectives	Task	Percentage of final Grade
Coursework One Research Portfolio	- Learn to get information from academic research. - Introduction to format of peer reviewed articles in psychology. - Master academic notetaking: annotated bibliography - Use paraphrasing and APA referencing correctly and effectively. - Evaluate issues in research	- Read two psychology articles (teacher will guide selection). - Annotate aim, method, findings, strengths, and weaknesses. - Write a 500-word reflection (what you learned, challenges, skills). - Submit with APA referencing.	20%
Coursework Two Individual Presentation	- Subject specific academic English development: presentations - Use paraphrasing and referencing correctly and effectively. - Given an account of outcomes of a self-directed learning task. - Share learning and findings with an audience of peers. - Evaluation with debates & issues and approaches.	- Deliver an 8–10 minute presentation on a psychological theory, study, or research method from Module 1. - Include clear explanation, application to real-world examples, and evaluation. - Use an AI tool to generate a brief outline/summary of your topic and critically reflect on the strengths, limitations, and ethical considerations of AI in academic work. - Use slides/visuals to support your presentation.	20%

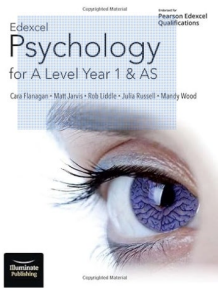
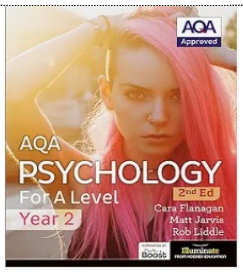
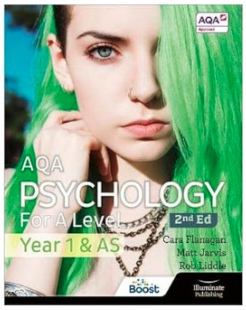
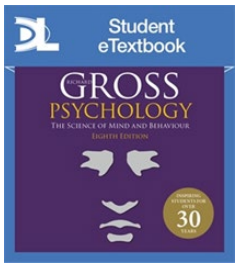
		- Answer questions at the end. - Reference all sources correctly in APA format.	
Multiple Choice Topic Tests *MCQ1 Approaches & Research Methods (Chapter 1.1 & 1.2)* *MCQ2Social and Cognitive Psychology (Chapter 1.3 & 1.4)* *MCQ3 Biopsychology & Aggression (Chapter 1.5 & 2.1)* *MCQ 4 Relationships & Psychopathology (Chapter 2.2 & 2.3)*	- Knowledge of topics, research methods, debates & issues, and approaches. - Repeated practice & recall - Show understanding of psychological concepts and theories and apply these to real life examples	- Revise topics and sit a 20-mark test on Inspera in various intervals. - 30-minutes per test - This should be done during class time, under the supervision of the Psychology teacher.	20 %
Final Exam (Controlled Assessment)	- Applying subject knowledge and academic skills developed in the course to answer research methods, application and discussion questions on debates and issues.	- Two-part written exam (40 marks, 2 hours). - Section A – Short Answer Questions (20 marks): 4–6 structured questions requiring application and evaluation of psychological theories, studies, or methods.	40%

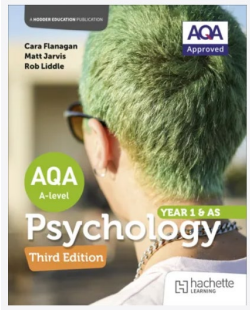
		- Section B – Extended Essay (20 marks): One essay requiring depth, structured argument, and evaluation of theories or studies. - Students may bring two sides of handwritten A4 notes (own work). - Exam will be supervised and completed in the exam hall.

Changes from Previous (2024) Specifications

- Coursework 1: Now a research portfolio where students complete an annotated bibliography on two articles and a 500-word reflection. This accounts for 20% of the final UFP Psychology grade.
- Coursework 2: Remains an individual presentation (20% of the final grade), focusing on a psychological theory, study, or research method from Module 1, with a brief critical reflection on the use of AI in academic work.
- MCQ tests: Four tests (20% of final grade) spread across the year to support recall and application.
- Final Exam: Retained as a major assessment (40% of the final grade), held during the CATS UFP Final Exam Weeks. Students may bring two sides of handwritten A4 notes.
- Psychopathology: Chapter simplified and under culture specific psychology pathologies, disorders such as Koro and Taijin Kyofusho has been explicitly mentioned.
- Module order: Psychopathology now precedes Debates & Issues, allowing students to learn concrete studies and disorders before tackling abstract debates and evaluation.
- Reading Shares**:** Removed.

Suggested Resources

	Flanagan, C, et al (2018) **Edexcel Psychology for A level Year 1 and AS.** Student Book: Paperback. **ISBN 10: 1911208594**	Use for Module 1 Foundations and Research Methods.
	Flanagan, Jarvis, M, & Liddle, R (2020) **AQA Psychology for A Level Year 2** Student Book: 2nd Paperback **ISBN 10: 1912820463**	Use for Module 2 Applications
	Flanagan, Jarvis & Liddle (2020) **AQA Psychology for A Level Year 1 & AS Student Book:** 2nd edition **ISBN 10: 1912820420**	Useful additional resource. You will only be assessed on content from p.136-157 in this book – and these pages will be made available to you online by your teacher.
	Gross, R. (2022) **Psychology the Science of Mind and Behaviour.** Student e-book. Hodder Education, 8th edition **Available for £10 1-year access from:** https://www.hoddereducation.co.uk/subjects/psychology/products/16-18/psychology-the-science-of-mind-and-behaviour-8-(1)	Use as a resource for additional reading around topics and design coursework research.



Flanagan, C., Jarvis, M., & Liddle, R. (2025). **AQA Psychology for A Level: Year 1 and AS (3rd ed.).** Student Book: Paperback.

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Simply Psychology	https://www.simplypsychology.org/
Psychology Wizard	https://www.psychologywizard.net/
PsychBoost	https://www.youtube.com/@PsychBoost
Crashcourse	Crash Course Psychology Preview - YouTube

CONTACT US

Director of CATS UFP
Jonathan Hawkins
Mob: +447891674841
jhawkins@catsglobalschools.com

Assistant Director of CATS UFP
Ian Tay
itay@catsglobalschools.com

Principal Examiner of UFP Psychology
TBA

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