

PSY9500 (A – E) PhD Research Seminar Series course evaluation – (Spring 2026)

Introduction

PSY9500 is a five-part research seminar series (PSY9500A–E) for PhD candidates in Psychology at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo. The series is designed to support candidates' academic development through scientific dialogue, skills training, and structured feedback across seven topic-specific seminar groups. Parts A, B and C are obligatory components of the PhD programme, while parts D and E are elective but recommended for continued support later in the PhD. Each part corresponds to one semester of participation.

In spring 2026, 44 candidates were enrolled in the seminar series. This evaluation is based on responses from 13 candidates who completed the anonymous course evaluation (response rate 30%). The questionnaire covered the seminar series, the common lecture in research ethics, privacy and project approvals, and the kappa (introductory thesis section) course.

Alignment with objectives and overall value

Most respondents report that the seminar series, including the common lectures, fits well with the stated PSY9500 learning objectives, and that the course as a whole delivers the knowledge and skills advertised. Core domains such as scientific thinking, research methodology, and academic writing are clearly represented, and candidates describe PSY9500 primarily as a useful arena for discussing ongoing projects and gaining insight into other research areas. Implementation-oriented content is less visible in some groups and is an area for potential strengthening.

Seminar group activities, workload and structure

Across groups, the seminar groups are strongly activity-based: candidates present their work, give and receive feedback, and participate in research discussions; short inputs from the seminar leader frame or supplement these activities. Most respondents find the workload appropriate for 1 ECTS, with the majority indicating that demands match expectations. Work is largely driven by candidates' own projects; many groups lack fixed reading lists, and material is instead shared ad hoc (e.g., drafts, selected articles). Most feel able to find relevant literature themselves, though some would prefer a somewhat more defined curriculum.

Teaching quality is generally rated as good, and seminar leaders are perceived as competent and supportive. Around three quarters of respondents are satisfied with the current balance between candidate-driven activities and teacher input and do not see a substantial need for more lecturing; roughly one quarter would welcome somewhat more structure and formal teaching. Free-text comments suggest that in some seminar groups the breadth of topics and needs can make sessions feel diffuse, and more clearly defined themes or learning goals per meeting could improve focus. Heterogeneous group composition is experienced as both enriching and challenging; some students suggest alternating between more topic-focused, teacher-led meetings and more open, participant-directed discussions to handle this diversity.

Requests for future content include more systematic input on formal methods and scientific thinking, research communication and presentation skills, media training, qualitative methods, and more concrete guidance on tools and AI resources that are UiO-compliant.

Midway assessments (PSY9050) are generally perceived as relevant and helpful for structuring progress; most respondents view them positively. However, comments from at least one group indicate that when many meetings are used for midterms, there is too little time for broader research-related discussion, suggesting a need to balance these functions more carefully.

Common ethics lecture within PSY9500

The joint lecture in “Research ethics, privacy and project approvals” is generally seen as aligned with PSY9500’s objectives: most students report that it clarified their obligations as researchers in Norway and helped them understand how to proceed with approvals and data protection. The case examples used are highlighted as an engaging way to practice ethical reasoning and stimulate discussion.

At the same time, a substantial proportion of respondents experience significant overlap with obligatory faculty-level PhD ethics courses and other ethics components and describe the overall ethics provision as repetitive. Several students state that parts of the theoretical content could just as well have been shared in written form or as an online resource.

Within the broader seminar evaluation, students therefore recommend that the ethics component in PSY9500 be:

- Shorter and more targeted, focusing on PSI-specific procedures and practicalities rather than repeating general ethics theory.
- More hands-on, e.g., including live work with ForskPro/IRB applications or a “mock” internal ethics committee based on actual project descriptions
- Better coordinated with other ethics courses to avoid redundancy, with clear communication about what is mandatory for whom.

These suggestions point to an opportunity to refine how the ethics lecture functions as part of the overall PSY9500 learning pathway.

Kappa course as part of the writing and progression support

The new kappa course (introductory thesis section) is also evaluated within the PSY9500 context. All respondents consider it well aligned with PSY9500’s objectives, and all report that it clarified the requirements of a good introductory chapter/kappa and gave concrete guidance on how to proceed with writing and structuring their thesis. Students report that their questions were largely answered and that they feel better equipped to plan the overarching build of their project from an early stage.

Within the broader seminar series, the kappa course is thus perceived as a particularly effective contribution to the learning outcomes on academic writing and thesis completion. Candidates especially appreciate the use of concrete kappa examples and committee feedback, and several highlight the lecturers’ clarity and engagement.

Framework conditions and concluding reflections

Framework conditions (rooms, light, sound, temperature) for seminars and common lectures are generally rated as acceptable to good, but there are recurring comments about warm, stuffy rooms and sub-optimal acoustics, particularly in the larger joint sessions.

Taken together, the feedback indicates that PSY9500—including the seminar groups, ethics lecture, and kappa course—is experienced as a relevant and supportive part of the PhD programme. The main development areas concern:

- Slightly clearer structure and thematic focus in some seminar groups
- A better balance between midway assessments and broader discussion time
- More systematic coverage of methods, communication skills and implementation-related perspectives
- A more targeted, practice-oriented ethics component with less overlap with other courses
- A somewhat tighter, but more hands-on kappa course with follow-up opportunities

These adjustments would further strengthen the coherence and perceived value of PSY9500 as a core element of PhD training in Psychology.