

Summary of Student Feedback for PSYC2231

Course evaluation, Spring 2026

Executive summary

The student feedback suggests that PSYC2231 is perceived as an important, relevant, and potentially very interesting course. Several students reported that they learned useful material, especially in genetics, GWAS/PGS, stress, and pain. Lectures on stress and pain were repeatedly highlighted as engaging and valuable, and some students also found the seminars useful.

At the same time, the evaluation indicates a clear need for improvement. The main concerns were not primarily about the number of teaching hours, which most students considered sufficient, but about course organisation, curriculum clarity, pedagogical progression, seminar and exam alignment, and the language and structure of the exam questions.

The most urgent priorities are to publish one final curriculum list before the course begins, align lectures, seminars, learning objectives and exam questions, provide a more accessible introduction for students without strong biology background, review the balance between behavioural genetics and broader biological psychology, and improve the quality control of exam wording and terminology.

Key quantitative findings

Area	Main result
Academic benefit	Most students reported moderate to good academic benefit; no students selected the poorest category.
Need for change	No students selected that the course should continue unchanged; most rated the need for change as substantial.
Workload	Many students experienced the course as more demanding than expected for 5 credits.
Attendance	Attendance was high: nearly half reported 100% attendance and many others around 75%.
Curriculum	Nearly half preferred a more fixed curriculum.
Teaching amount	Most students considered the amount of teaching sufficient; the concern was content, structure, and relevance rather than the number of teaching hours.
Framework conditions	Technical and physical conditions were generally evaluated positively; some students requested lecture recordings.

Thematic summary of feedback

1. Course content was seen as important and interesting

Students generally recognised the value of the course content. Some comments described the subject as more interesting than anticipated, and several students noted that they had learned useful knowledge. Stress and pain lectures were especially appreciated, and some students valued learning about modern genetic approaches such as GWAS and PGS.

2. Curriculum information was unclear and changed too late

A recurring concern was that the curriculum was unclear, unstable, or inconsistent across platforms. Students reported that reading lists were not ready before teaching started, that different lists appeared in different places, and that some readings were removed after students had already read them. This made it difficult to prepare, reduced motivation, and increased stress.

3. The course felt demanding for a 5-credit course

Several students felt that the workload exceeded what is normally expected for a 5-credit course. The issue was not only the amount of reading, but the difficulty of the concepts, the technical nature of parts of the genetics content, and the extra workload created by unclear expectations and late curriculum information.

4. Early lectures were too advanced for many students

Many students felt that the first two or three lectures assumed prior biological knowledge that not all students had. The pace was perceived as too fast, with insufficient introduction to basic biological and genetic concepts. Students suggested a more accessible introductory component at the beginning of the course.

5. Teaching quality varied across lecturers

Students described substantial variation between lecturers. Some lecturers were considered very good, especially those teaching stress and pain, while others were viewed as too advanced, less pedagogical, or difficult to follow. The feedback points to a need for stronger coordination between lecturers and clearer adaptation to students' prior knowledge.

6. Seminars were useful for some students but insufficiently aligned with the whole course

The seminars received mixed feedback. Some students found them useful, but others felt that they focused too narrowly on behavioural genetics and did not prepare students sufficiently for the multiple-choice component of the exam. Several students suggested that seminars should cover the whole course more systematically and include more exam-relevant practice.

7. The exam was the strongest area of criticism

The exam, especially the multiple-choice questions, was criticised as too difficult, too specific, and insufficiently aligned with what had been emphasised in lectures, seminars, and the curriculum. Students also reported that several questions were poorly worded, contained spelling or grammar problems, or used ambiguous terminology. Many students felt that the exam sometimes tested language comprehension rather than academic knowledge.

8. Exam time was perceived as too short

Several students felt that three hours was too short given the number and type of questions. Some suggested extending the exam to four hours, reducing the number or specificity of questions, or making previous/example multiple-choice questions available so students can better understand the expected level and style.

9. Balance between biological psychology and genetics should be reviewed

Some students felt that the course title implies a broader balance between biological psychology and genetics, whereas the course was experienced as heavily weighted toward behavioural genetics. Students suggested strengthening topics such as the autonomic nervous system, hormones, HPA axis, sleep, stress, pain, and social isolation, especially where these topics are included in the stated learning objectives.

10. Lecture recordings would be helpful

Students requested lecture recordings, particularly because some topics were difficult and because the teaching and reading language could make the material harder to process in real time.

Recommended actions for the next course iteration

1. Publish one clear and final curriculum list before the course begins, organised by lecture and seminar.
2. Ensure that Canvas, Leganto/reading-list systems, lecture plans, and exam expectations are fully consistent.
3. Add a more accessible introductory block at the start of the course, especially for students without strong biology background.
4. Coordinate lecturers more closely to ensure continuity, progression, and appropriate pedagogical level.
5. Review the balance between behavioural genetics and broader biological psychology.
6. Make seminars more structured and explicitly linked to the whole course, not only behavioural genetics.
7. Include exam-relevant seminar exercises, including practice with the logic of multiple-choice questions.
8. Quality-control all exam questions for clarity, grammar, terminology, and direct alignment with curriculum and learning objectives.
9. Consider reducing exam specificity, extending exam time, or providing example multiple-choice questions.
10. Consider recording lectures, especially for technically difficult topics.

Proposed concise statement for administration

The student feedback suggests that PSYC2231 is perceived as an important and interesting course, but that substantial improvements are needed in organisation, curriculum clarity, pedagogical progression, and assessment alignment. Students particularly appreciated some lectures, especially on stress and pain, and several reported that they learned useful material. However, many students found the curriculum unclear and unstable, with reading lists changing during the course and differing across platforms. The first lectures were often perceived as too advanced and insufficiently adapted to students' prior knowledge.

Students generally considered the amount of teaching sufficient, but felt that lectures and seminars did not consistently prepare them for the exam, especially the multiple-choice section. The strongest criticism concerned the exam: students found several questions too specific, poorly worded, ambiguous, and insufficiently aligned with what had been emphasised in the course. Many also felt that the exam time was too short. For future iterations, the main priorities should be a fixed curriculum before course start, better coordination between lecturers and seminars, clearer introductory teaching, stronger alignment between learning objectives and assessment, and careful quality control of exam language and content.