

RESPONSE TO STUDENT CONSULTATION ON LEVEL 1 PLANNING GROUP

SUMMARY

This is a response to the consultation on [Psychology & Counselling Board of Studies Student Consultative Forum](#) - February 2021 which took place between 8th and 22nd February.

The aim of this consultation was to receive feedback from Psychology students about studying at level 1 and to see if there were any suggestions could be incorporated into the new two level 1 Psychology modules. Students were asked nine questions about their studies at level 1 including; topics they enjoyed, and challenges they faced, and what they wished they had known at the start. The students added their own thread on tutorials. There were 121 students who were registered (10,337 eligible students), there were posts by 86 students, with 43 posting at least twice and 54 total ratings (likes and favourites).

The feedback was considered at the level 1 planning group meeting, this group has the module chairs and module team members, who are the staff that will be working on the two new level 1 modules. The feedback was also considered at the Psychology and Counselling Board of Studies meeting. One of the themes that appeared a few times was the jump from level 1 to level 2 study, and the amount of statistics at level 2. This is an issue that was already in discussion and the plan is to introduce research methods and statistics earlier in level 1, so that there is a smoother transition to level 2 study. The topic of tutors also appeared in several comments, from building rapport with ones' tutor and not understanding how a tutor can help, also the inconsistency between different tutors. In response, when creating the new modules, we will make the tutor's role clearer at the beginning of each module and write clear tutor briefings to ensure consistency between tutors. There were comments about there not being enough Psychology in DD102 and one of the purposes of the two new level 1 Psychology modules is to increase the amount of Psychology at level 1. There were several topics that students had enjoyed, including authoritarian and obedience studies, intelligence, behaviourism, discourse analysis, language and the brain and child psychology and a number of these topics will be included in the new Psychology modules. The remaining feedback from the students included in this report will be taken into consideration when creating the new modules, the process for these begin in the Autumn of 2021.

FULL RESPONSE

Forums questions

Student response

Next steps, if appropriate

1. We are interested in what you had studied before you started Psychology at the OU. If you previously studied Psychology, what course did you take? And if you didn't previously study Psychology, were there any courses or subjects you had previously studied which you found helpful at Level 1?

There was a broad mixture of previous study. Some students had not previously studied any Psychology, a couple had done A-Level Psychology, and Sociology. Several already had an undergraduate degree in a different discipline, e.g. biology, osteopathy, OU open degrees. A few had completed the access course in Psychology.

The Level 1 planning team discussed how the new Level 1 modules will need to consider people with different educational backgrounds. So, ensuring that those who have not previously studied at higher education are supported, whilst those who may already have an undergraduate degree do not find the content too basic.

2. Thinking about how you have used your learning from Level 1 at Level 2. What have been the most useful parts of Level 1 for studying Level 2? What else would you have liked to learn at Level 1 to help you with Level 2? For these questions, you could think about both topics, and skills such as academic writing or methods.

Many students felt there was a big jump to Level 2 in terms of stats, SPSS, reading academic papers, stricter rules over referencing. Investigating methods was found to be useful and to process of writing up an experiment. Many would have liked more skills such as planning essay, referencing, seeing sample essays/TMAs. Also more preparation in statistics, introducing SPSS at Level 1 so that is wasn't so daunting at Level 2.

Some members of the Level 1 planning team have been in discussions with the DE200 module team to see if there are methods that can be first encountered at Level 1 and then revised at Level 2. This would also involve introducing SPSS, in some form at Level 1. These issues are still under discussion with the Level 1 module chairs. Skills mapping, e.g. essay writing, statistics, etc. is still being discussed in the planning group in preparation for module production.

3. Reflecting back, what would you say was the most challenging aspect of Level 1 and why?

Several students commented upon getting back into studying after a long period away. Structuring essays correctly, understanding what the TMAs are asking for. Inconsistency in tutor's expectations was commented upon by several students, some were more supportive than others, inconsistency over referencing. Lack of interactions to discuss topics more in depth, or help when trying to understand difficult topics, concepts. Planning time effectively.

We appreciate that it is important to understand how to get the most from TMAs and for students to understand what is expected of them as well as how to structure correctly.

An Associate Lecturer (tutor) briefing before the new modules begin should address any inconsistencies in expectations and make clear the expected referencing style.

4. Thinking back to when you started the course, we'd like to know about how what you learnt met or defied your expectations. What were you expecting to learn or study, and how was it different, or surprising?

There were comments about not understanding what tutors could do to help, wishing that they had engaged with them earlier. Underestimating and/or being surprised at the amount of statistics, especially the jump at Level 2. Also, the jump in TMAs at Level 2 was unexpected by some, and they wished they had been more prepared. Comments on there not being enough Psychology in DD102.

The development of these two new Level 1 Psychology modules is partly to address the current lack of Psychology content in DD102. As there will be more time across the two modules, we are planning to introduce stats more slowly than in the current provision, and also cover more material than in the current Level 1. This should hopefully help to ease the transition between Level 1 and 2.

5. What were the most interesting topics you studied at Level 1? Which parts of the modules did you enjoy most?

Some of the students enjoyed the more topics on DE100, as compared to DD102, although some that thought the

Developmental psychology will be covered more extensively in the new modules, for all students. We will

City Rd concept was useful for exploring different topics. Specific topics that were mentioned were authoritarian and obedience studies, intelligence, behaviourism, discourse analysis, language & the brain
Several students mentioned child psychology from E102. also bear in mind these popular topics when planning the detail of the new modules. Similarly, to the City Road concept, we are thinking of organising the topics covered around everyday scenarios, to make it clear how the psychology being learnt is relevant to everyday life.

6. Thinking back over Level 1, we'd love to know how you've found it – what do you know now that you wish you'd known at the start and what would be your top tips for a new student about to start their Level 1?

There were lots of top tips and suggestions. Examples were build rapport with your tutor and use them as much as necessary, make the effort to go to face to face tutorials, join OUPs, engage with tutor feedback on TMAs, ask questions, be organised keep up with weekly study and don't leave TMAs to the last minute. Ask for help if you need it. Explore the website, there are FAQs, and the library website is useful for referencing resources. Read the notes. Comments about social media and to not get sucked into Facebook and WhatsApp groups, although others found these groups valuable. One student commented upon the introductory videos that tutors had made for their student due to the pandemic and wondered if they could be carried forward.

Thank you so much for all of your ideas! We hope to utilise many of them within the new production and it is a good suggestion to remind Associate Lecturers (tutors) to signpost students to the official resources at the OU, as well as distinguishing these from social media.

7. We'd like to know here what you thought about your assessments. Which assessments from Level 1 did you enjoy the most, which were the most useful for Level 2 study, and which were the most challenging?

Several students commented on the report writing in DE100 and how valuable it was for DE200. Many said they enjoyed TMA02 and TMA03 of DE100. The exercises on referencing, reflection, structing essays, the PEEL method were all seen as useful. Some students said the TMAs from DE100 were more useful for Level 2 than those from DD102. There were a few students who liked the iCMAs.
There was a comment about too many essays at Level 1 and would like some more applied TMAs to teach real world skills, although when every TMA is different it can be difficult to carry skills from one TMA to another. There were comments about inconsistencies in tutors marking.

We will carefully consider the assessment content for the new Level 1 modules. It is highly likely we will include at least one report as an assessment, to still help prepare for DE200. We are hopeful that spreading the research methods content over two modules will enable even more preparation and skills building in this area. We are also considering a range of assessment types including essays and more 'real world' applied assessments as well.

8. What module did you study at Level 1 in addition to DE100 and did you study both together, or over two years?

The majority of students studied DD102, with only a few studying E102 or SDK100 prior to DE100. Many said that they felt there was no choice due to the modules being compulsory. One student said they would have liked to have the option to do the criminology module at Level 1.
There was pretty much an even split between those studying full time doing both modules over 1 year and

The Level 1 planning group has discussed how both modules need to take into account the issue that students maybe studying at different intensities. The TMAs for both modules can be mapped to reduce the chances of clashes for those studying both modules at the same time.

those who took 2 years, or studied in a staggered pattern starting with a J (October) presentation for the first module and then the B (February) for the second module.

9. Is there anything that we forgot to ask you?

One student suggested they would like to see a model answers for the TMAs and cancelled EMAs.
One student suggested “...*there is a huge wave of depressive and anxious symptoms being felt across society, and it seems like the courses should include something about the psychological and social challenges of climate change.*”
To ensure that all independent reading suggestions are available free to students and that links work/aren't broken.
Being able to download materials was useful.
More support with essay writing.
Having direct messaging (DM) on the VLE was suggested by one student to help students interact with each other and discuss materials, etc...
Access to material on SPSS at Level 1, more methods at Level 1 to help prepare for Level 2.
Updated material on autism, challenging the Baron Cohen approach.
More topics including mental health and trauma.
Seeing more of academics, from podcasts from the authors, videos of academics, tutors discussing their research or topics.
Could the OU offer research experience to students over the summer break even remotely so they can gain experience.

Some fantastic feedback here, thank you for your engagement with the forum. We are actively considering a number of topic areas which include mental health and climate change, so thank you for the suggestions. We will also take into consideration the visibility of the module team and academics writing the material. The module chairs have also been in discussions with the DE200 module team about how to support methods at Level 2, and we are aiming to cover more material to provide more grounding in research methods at Level 1.

A thread was set up by the students on tutorials.

There was differing support for face-to-face and online tutorials. There were comments about whether the OU would consider using a more interactive tool for online tutorials as there is a lack of engagement. Comments about 'clunky' Adobe Connect.
There was a suggestion for a specific online tutorial for statistics.
Some TED like lectures that could be live streamed with an interactive facility on topics for each block of the modules, and tutors giving talks on their research.
Tutorials could also be used to update come of the teaching materials as they become out of date.

Thank you for adding this thread. It is helpful to have student input into what tutorials would be helpful and we will certainly be considering your ideas as regards the content offered on the new module websites and when guidance is produced for Associate Lecturers (tutors).

Overall, this has been an informative process for the module team, so thank you to all the students who took the time to take part. It was useful to integrate the student's reflections into our preliminary planning discussions.

One issue of the consultative forum that should be taken into account is that out of over ten thousand student who were eligible to take part and are studying Psychology, only a small number registered and responded to the consultation. Whether these students' views are representative of the wider body of Psychology students is unknown.

A number of the issues that have emerged from the consultation, e.g. more support for methods for Level 2 and increasing the amount of applied psychology, are issues that the planning team was already going to investigate, so it is reassuring that these are issues that the students also feel are important.

Date: 21/06/21