

Student Survey Insights:

Why Animal Sentience Education is Essential

The questionnaire completed by Sociology students at UWC was a powerful indictment of the current curriculum and a clear mandate for change. The results reveal a strong desire to discuss complex, ethical issues surrounding our relationship with non-humans.

SURVEY FINDING	RESULT	KEY IMPLICATION
<i>Exposure to Animal Sentience</i>	74% said high school did not afford them the opportunity to familiarise themselves with animal sentience.	Curriculum update is needed to address a basic concept in modern ethics.
<i>Animals as Resources Only</i>	84% said animals were primarily discussed as resources, not as sentient beings.	The curriculum promotes a purely utilitarian view of animals.
<i>Interest in Scientific Recognition</i>	98% said they would have been interested in learning about the scientific recognition of animal sentience (e.g., the major international conferences in 2005/2006).	Students are keen for a science-based, up-to-date view.
<i>Desire for Ethical Discussion</i>	93% said they would have been interested in a structured discussion on the ethical double standards regarding pets versus equally sentient farm animals.	Students want to analyse moral consistency in human-animal interactions.
<i>Recognition of the 'Us vs. Them' Mentality</i>	100% said exposure at high school to the 'us' and 'them' mentality regarding ourselves and animals would have encouraged an interest in animal welfare.	Early intervention is seen as a <u>key way</u> to foster compassion and breakdown speciesism.
<i>Legal and Moral Implications</i>	91% were not presented with the opportunity to study South Africa's 2016 Constitutional Court judgment that recognised animals as sentient beings with intrinsic value .	There is a lack of knowledge about significant national legal precedents.
<i>Critical Thinking Preparation</i>	100% said they would have liked the opportunity to analyse complex ethical issues (trophy hunting, animal experimentation, etc.), believing it would have been good preparation for critical thinking at university level .	Sentience education is viewed as a valuable tool for developing advanced academic skills.
<i>Value of the Lesson Plan</i>	98% said the Lesson Plan on Animal Sentience, as presented, would have been a valuable addition to their senior phase education.	Overwhelming endorsement for this specific educational module.