

Evaluating the teaching and degree programmes at the School of Communication and Culture

The board of studies at the School of Communication and Culture has adopted the following evaluation policy for all its Bachelor's, Master's and further education degree programmes. The policy follows the requirements specified by the Faculty of Arts and describes the initiatives which should be taken in connection with the evaluation of individual courses and entire degree programmes. It also outlines initiatives which are not necessarily compulsory. Essentially, the policy outlines minimum requirements. Each degree programme board is therefore free to introduce evaluation practices which supplement the procedures described in this document.

The evaluation policy of the School of Communication and Culture was implemented in the autumn semester of 2012 and evaluated and adjusted by the board of studies in the autumn of 2013. At the beginning of the spring semester of 2016, the policy was adjusted once more after it had been discussed by the board of studies and with the vice-dean for education.

The director of studies is responsible for ensuring that all the teaching staff are familiar with these evaluation procedures and their responsibilities in this connection. The director of studies is also responsible for informing the head of school on an ongoing basis about the evaluation results, and for involving the head of school in follow-up measures requiring the involvement of the head of the school.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The School of Communication and Culture offers a broad range of degree programmes, each of which has its own content, academic profile and history. The academic diversity of the programmes makes it necessary to develop an evaluation policy which respects these differences while paving the way for an exchange of experiences, comparisons across fields and mutual inspiration.

The policy is based on the principle that the evaluation and development of teaching activities is best dealt with by the departments concerned. In the light of this, introducing completely identical evaluation practices for all the degree programmes at



the school would not be a wise move. However, the absence of a common framework and standards would not be productive either, because it would prevent mutual inspiration and the chance to learn from each other's positive experiences.

So the purpose of the evaluation policy is to describe a procedure which will make it possible to develop local evaluation practices as well as providing the opportunity to gather experience across the various departments. The purpose is also to design an evaluation model which clearly states who is responsible for the different parts of the evaluation procedures, as well as to ensure that responsibility is located at the appropriate level of the organisation.

In other words, some parts of the evaluation should be carried out and revised by the degree programme boards, while other parts should reside with the board of studies.

Responsibility for subject-specific aspects of the evaluation relating to the degree programme boards rests with the chairs of the degree programme boards; the chair of the board of studies is responsible for implementing aspects of the evaluation relating to the board of studies (comparing degree programmes, identifying initiatives related to mutual inspiration and exchanging experiences).

With this in mind, the evaluation procedures should help to:

1. Develop and assure the quality of individual courses and supervision processes with a view to improving student learning outcomes and ensuring that the individual courses are research-based
2. Develop and assure the quality of *entire* degree programmes with a view to improving student learning outcomes and ensuring that these programmes are research-based
3. Ensure that specific educational initiatives and activities can be evaluated (for example, introductions for new students at Master's degree level or planned academic activities) in order to determine whether they should be developed further or discontinued
4. Give the public access to information about the evaluation results

In addition to meeting the formal, statutory requirements, the evaluation policy can be said to fulfil a number of derived objectives which must also be incorporated into the actual evaluation practice, including not least the intention that the evaluation itself should help to increase the students' awareness and evaluation of their own learning in relation to the learning objectives of their courses. It is therefore important that the school's evaluation policy is implemented in such a way

that it helps to promote reflective learning and ongoing consideration of the types of knowledge, skills and competences that can be promoted by various learning activities.

STAKEHOLDERS

The school's evaluation policy is designed in such a way that it meets the needs of the different stakeholders who have an interest in the evaluation of our courses and degree programmes. This includes the following stakeholders in particular:

1. Current and future students, who are interested in teaching practices and degree programmes being planned in a way which ensures the best possible learning outcomes
2. Teaching staff, who want to develop appropriate teaching practices and degree programmes, both as a group and as individuals
3. The management, who are responsible for assessing quality and resource requirements in relation to overall strategic and academic goals and ensuring that our degree programmes are based on research
4. Politicians and the general public, who need to be able to establish whether the quality achieved matches the resources invested

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

The evaluation of teaching practices at the School of Communication and Culture is divided into three different areas (individual courses, special initiatives and entire degree programmes). Each of these areas has its own procedures.

1. Evaluation procedure 1: Evaluation of individual courses

As mentioned above, the purpose of the evaluation is to develop and assure the quality of teaching practices, and not least to encourage reflective learning processes in the students. The concept of quality assurance is suggestive of *summary* evaluation and reporting methods which determine the extent to which the desired results have been achieved. Quality assurance therefore calls for a clear and concise reporting format. The concept of quality development invites a *formative* evaluation practice focusing on development and decisions in a forward-looking perspective. Quality development must therefore focus on the teaching process and on specific adjustments in a forward-looking perspective (either during the course itself or the

next time the course is offered), while also having a clear learning-oriented perspective.

The evaluation procedures for individual courses have been developed with a view to taking both of these aspects into account. The heads of department have day-to-day responsibility for developing and assuring the quality of individual courses. They must ensure that the following evaluation procedure is observed:

- A. Expectations must be balanced (during the first teaching session)
- B. There must be an oral and/or written mid-term evaluation of all courses
- C. There must be a final written evaluation for some or all of the courses to answer the questions stipulated by the institution concerned (as a minimum) This part of the evaluation can be supplemented by an extended written and/or oral evaluation followed by a report about some or all of the courses (as decided by the degree programme board)

Re. A. Balancing expectations. Expectations should be balanced at the start of all the courses: the teacher explains what the students can expect from the course and what they are expected to contribute in the form of active participation. The purpose is to clarify and discuss the premises for the course and to provide a basis for subsequent evaluation activities. The following points should therefore be discussed:

- Course description
- Academic objectives and educational objectives
- Literature/syllabus
- Type of examination and requirements
- Forms of teaching and learning activities
- Expectations regarding preparation and active participation by students
- Students' expectations as regards the course content and forms of teaching
- Other expectations relevant for the course in question

Re. B. Carrying out an oral and/or written mid-term evaluation. The oral or written mid-term evaluation focuses on discussing whether it would be an advantage to adjust or change specific aspects of the course as regards the role of the teacher(s) in as well as the students' contribution to the learning process.

The questions should be based on the themes that were discussed during the initial balancing of expectations. Thus, the following topics should be considered:

- To what extent have the learning activities supported the academic and educational objectives?
- Are the teaching and learning activities appropriate in terms of developing the competences which will be tested at the exam?
- To what extent do the students' commitment and active participation live up to the expectations outlined at the start of the course?
- Are the syllabus and academic level perceived as being appropriate?

The mid-term evaluation is primarily a process which is specific to the course in question and does not necessarily have to be summarised in writing or discussed by the degree programme board. Each degree programme board decides whether and how mid-term evaluations should be reported and discussed locally. Mid-term evaluations are only required for courses lasting for more than six weeks. This means that summer university courses and other short, intensive courses do not have to carry out mid-term evaluations.

Re. C. Final evaluation. Each degree programme board must decide whether a final evaluation is necessary for all the courses offered, or whether they prefer to choose a certain number of courses for evaluation to prevent students from growing weary of the evaluation process. If a decision is made to evaluate only selected courses, please bear the following points in mind:

1. The evaluations must follow a cycle which ensures that all compulsory courses are evaluated at least once every three years.
2. At least one course must be evaluated each semester on each degree programme (Bachelor's, Master's, and continuing/further education).
3. Final evaluation is also required for all summer university courses and courses conducted across two or more degree programmes including humanities electives and profile courses.
4. With a view to ensuring that assistant professors, PhD students, part-time lecturers and assistant lecturers can develop and document their teaching practice, courses which are largely taught by these groups should always be evaluated.
5. Newly developed compulsory courses must always be evaluated.

Each degree programme board decides which method(s) should be used. However, all evaluations must utilise the common electronic questionnaire and include (at a minimum) the three general AU questions. The evaluation should result in a written memo which must be signed by the teacher(s) and at least one student. This memo must be sent to the relevant head of department .

The evaluation should address the following questions as a minimum:

1. Did the course match the course description and meet the academic objectives?
2. Did the course have the necessary academic level?
3. Was the literature/syllabus appropriate?
4. Which learning activities did the students find useful/less useful in relation to their learning process?
5. Was there a clear connection between the form of teaching, the learning activities and the exam?
6. Which aspects can the teacher(s) use to develop the teaching activities on the course which has been evaluated?
7. Did the students prepare sufficiently for class, and did they participate actively?
8. Have the agreements made in connection with the mid-term evaluation been followed up on?

Based on all the memos received, the head of department and the degree programme board prepare a joint evaluation report for each degree programme (Bachelor's, Master's, professional Master's and supplementary subjects).

These reports must be sent to the board of studies well in advance of the meetings of the board of studies in January and June respectively. The reports must be anonymous and must be prepared in a way which renders them suitable for publication on the school's website. They must include the following as a minimum:

1. A description of the evaluation method(s) used
2. A list of the courses evaluated, categorised by degree programme and by level (Bachelor's and Master's)
3. Descriptions of successful experiences which may inspire others
4. Recommendations for special initiatives which have been highlighted by the evaluations, including an explanation of how to remedy general issues which have given rise to criticism

The director of studies is responsible for drawing up a final memo based on the reports drawn up by the heads of departments. This memo will be published on the website in May and September respectively.

2. Evaluation procedure 2: Evaluation of special initiatives

At regular intervals, the board of studies may decide to carry out a coordinated evaluation of special initiatives – for example, initiatives launched by two or more degree programme committees, or initiatives conceived following the exchange of experiences and mutual inspiration within the board of studies. Here are some examples of such special initiatives: the introduction of new teaching methods such as e-learning initiatives, activities between sessions, workshops and introductions at both Bachelor's and Master's level.

The approach used depends on the form and content of the initiatives in question, so the best procedure should be decided in connection with the specific evaluation process. Consequently, the chair of the board of studies is responsible for the evaluation procedure developed in collaboration with the board of studies and the degree programme board(s) concerned. A description of the procedure should be included in the reports prepared as a follow-up on the evaluations of special initiatives.

3. Evaluation procedure 3: Evaluation of entire degree programmes

While the ordinary evaluation of individual courses may contribute to the quality assurance and development of each course, there is no guarantee that such an evaluation practice in itself will help to gather knowledge of the horizontal connection between the courses offered in the same semester, the vertical connection between individual courses from one semester to the next, and the connections in entire degree programmes.

To ensure that these connections are evaluated, an annual planning cycle for the quality assurance and development of degree programmes at the Faculty of Arts has been introduced. According to this annual planning cycle, the quality of all degree programmes is assessed every year. The point of departure is the establishment of a data package which should be included in discussions of quality assurance by the departments during the *annual status review*. In order to ensure a student perspective on the major issues, the degree programme boards are included in the discussions. Brief plans of action are drawn up by way of follow-up on all status review meetings.

Based on these status review meetings, a number of degree programmes are chosen to participate in *dialogue meetings* with the vice-dean for education at the faculty. These meetings focus on various topics depending on the results of the data reports

and status reviews (for example, dropout and completion rates, the achievement of learning objectives at module level, compliance with the qualification profile, progression challenges and structural issues relating to the degree programmes, teaching methods and connection to student counselling). The results of the course evaluations dealt with by the degree programme board and board of studies can be included in the discussions, if this is deemed to be beneficial.

The dialogue meetings may lead to adjustments of the plan of action for the degree programme concerned.

In addition, a five-year *degree programme evaluation* process has been introduced to ensure that all degree programmes at the Faculty of Arts are evaluated carefully over the course of a five-year period. The results of the degree programme evaluations are discussed both by the board of studies in order to determine whether any cross-programme initiatives are required, and by the degree programme boards with a view to following up on programme-specific issues that require action. The degree programme evaluations may also result in an adjustment of the plan of action of the degree programme in question.

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