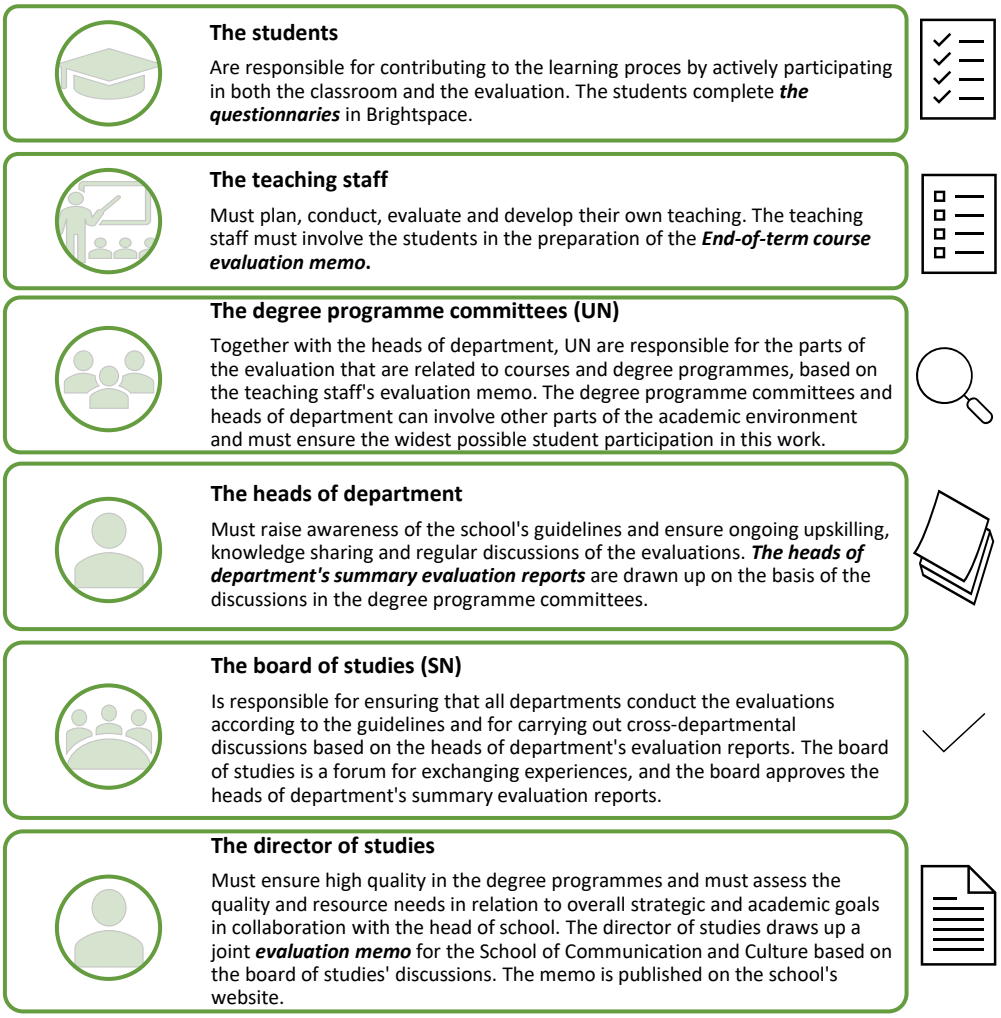
Guidelines for course evaluation at the School of Communication and Culture

PURPOSE

The evaluation process is an important part of the ongoing collaboration between teaching staff and students to develop courses and ensure the academic quality of the degree programmes. At the School of Communication and Culture, we therefore wish to focus on shared academic reflection on teaching methods and outcomes among teaching staff and students, with more time dedicated to dialogue and less time spent on documentation.

The ambition is to simplify the evaluation procedure and strengthen subject-specific discussions and ongoing follow-up, highlighting the value of the evaluation to the students and providing the teaching staff with useful feedback. The responsibility for the different parts of the evaluation process is described in the overview below:



The specific evaluation practice must contribute to increasing students' awareness and evaluation of their own learning in relation to the learning objectives of the individual courses. It must also contribute to both teaching staff and students continuously reflecting on what types of knowledge, skills and competencies are promoted through the different forms of learning activities.

PROCEDURE

Evaluation of teaching at the School of Communication and Culture follows the procedure below:

1. Alignment of expectations at the beginning of a course
2. Mid-term or ongoing (formative) evaluation
3. Final evaluation with written feedback in Brightspace
4. Follow-up and making the practical application of the evaluation visible

Regarding 1. Alignment of expectations at the beginning of a course:
All courses begin with an alignment of expectations through dialogue between the teacher and the students.

Recommendations:

- The teacher presents what the students can expect from the specific course, including learning objectives, curriculum, type of exam and requirements.
- The teacher and the students align expectations regarding forms of teaching and learning activities, including expectations for student participation in the course, how Brightspace is used, etc.
- The teacher outlines when, how and why evaluations are conducted.

Regarding 2. Mid-term or ongoing (formative) evaluation:
In all courses, a mid-term or ongoing evaluation must be conducted. The teacher decides how to organise the mid-term evaluation in a way that creates a safe and respectful space for reflection, where feedback and evaluation can become an integrated part of the learning process.

Recommendations:

- It may be a good idea to base the dialogue in connection with mid-term or ongoing evaluations on didactic questions such as: When/how do we learn best? What are we actually learning?
- The teacher can use hybrid evaluations, which allow students to provide anonymous feedback in real time. Tools like Mentimeter and Padlet can support this.
- The teacher can involve students, for example by letting them have initial group discussions without the presence, followed by a joint discussion where students provide collective feedback.

The mid-term/ongoing evaluation gives students the opportunity for concrete influence, while also fostering shared academic reflection on the teaching. This evaluation does not need to be summarised in writing or discussed in the degree programme committee.

Regarding 3. Final evaluation with written feedback in Brightspace

All courses must be evaluated when they have been completed, and all written final evaluations are conducted in Brightspace. The written final evaluation will automatically be set with a default start and end date, which the teacher can subsequently change.

At the School of Communication and Culture, it has been decided to reduce the number of questions in the written questionnaire and ensure that only one evaluation per course (ECTS-bearing course) is conducted to counteract evaluation fatigue. The written questionnaire contains AU's mandatory question (currently one question) and six questions at school level determined by the board of studies. These questions help address themes in sub-policy 2 and 3 of the overall evaluation policy for Arts. To enable tracking of developments in evaluations over time, the questions are set for a three-year period, although the director of studies may allow changes to the questions. If there is a need to evaluate a particular element of the teaching, the teacher can add up to two course-specific questions. This could be done to establish whether there was a good connection between lectures and classroom teaching in the course.

The teacher is responsible for allocating the necessary time to carry out or initiate the evaluation during the teaching. The teacher also assesses how the written final evaluation can best be supplemented with dialogue and how to create space for student involvement. All members of the teaching staff are responsible for ensuring that a final evaluation memo is written in collaboration with the students for use in degree programme board discussions. The teachers' evaluation memo is therefore used to develop their own teaching practice and contributes to discussions about teaching within the degree programme/department. These reflections can also be included in the teachers' teaching portfolio.

The final evaluation memo is drawn up using a joint template and must include a brief reflection on the course as well as any points of attention and adjustment needs.

Recommendations:

- The teacher explains why it is important to participate in the evaluations and what they are used for. The way evaluations are introduced has a significant impact on the students' engagement in the evaluation process and, consequently, the quality of the feedback that teachers and the degree programme receive for each course.
- The teacher should inform the students that the questionnaire is answered anonymously, but that what they write will be read, shared and used to improve the teaching. This can be a good opportunity to talk with students about maintaining a respectful tone in professional contexts.
- The teacher can share the final evaluation memo in Brightspace and encourage students to comment on or add to it.

Regarding 4. Follow-up and making the practical application of the evaluation visible

The head of department, in collaboration with the degree programme board, is responsible for systematic follow-up through subject-specific discussions based on the teachers' evaluation memos, involving students in the process as broadly as possible. This is important to ensure a meaningful evaluation culture on the degree programmes. Since the degree programmes differ, it is up to each department to plan and organise this important work in the way that best suits the department.

The head of department and the degree programme board have access to all the material and agree on how to structure the process and which parts of the evaluation material should be distributed to the degree programme board to facilitate the best possible discussion of the evaluation. As personnel manager, the head of department is responsible for the ongoing follow-up on the department's evaluation practice, including how teaching staff are upskilled and what initiatives are taken to encourage students' reflection on their own learning.

The head of department must ensure that significant general insights from course evaluations are included in the annual status review and implemented in the action plans where necessary.

Recommendation:

- The head of department may initiate the development of local formats for handover from semester to semester (or from year to year), involving students in the process to make it clear that the evaluation has a concrete and immediate impact on both the individual student's course of study and the degree programme as a whole.

Course evaluations must be reviewed by the degree programme board each semester. After their review, the head of department write a summary evaluation report using the designated template and submit it to the director of studies. The director of studies forwards the summary evaluation report to the board of studies for approval. Following the board of studies' approval, the director of studies writes a follow-up memo for the School of Communication and Culture. The director of studies informs the head of school and forwards the memo to the vice-dean for education. The director of studies' memo is published on the Arts study portal.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The school management team, in collaboration with the board of studies, has formulated the above evaluation guidelines for all degree programmes at the School of Communication and Culture as an implementation of Aarhus University's quality assurance policy.

The framework for the school's guidelines is determined by the overarching evaluation policy for Arts (adopted in autumn 2023), which follows the quality assurance practice for degree programmes at Arts.

The evaluation guidelines have been adopted by the school management team and the board of studies and, on their behalf, signed by:

Date:

Lars Kiel Bertelsen, Director of Studies Ethan Weed, Chair of the Board of Studies

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