Guidelines for course evaluations

The University is responsible for developing and renewing of its educational offerings. Course evaluations offers students an important opportunity to contribute to this quality work.

Course evaluations fulfils two main functions, in that:

- students have the opportunity to reflect upon their education in a structured manner and
- they provide a foundation for course development.

The Higher Education Ordinance (SFS 1993:100) Ch. 1, Sec. 14, states the following:

Higher education institutions shall enable students who are participating in or have completed a course to express their experiences of and views on the course through a course evaluation to be organised by the higher education institution. The higher education institution shall collate the course evaluations and provide information about their results and any actions prompted by the course evaluations. The results shall be made available to the students.

Faculty boards are the bodies responsible for research and education in their respective domains. Faculty boards decide about responsibilities and routines for the implementation of course evaluations. The present pan-University guidelines provide direction for work with course evaluations and target courses in the first (undergraduate), second (advanced) and third (doctoral) cycles.

In connection with the Ordinance text quoted above, the Vice Chancellor therefore issues the following guidelines:

1. Course evaluations must be carried out at, or close to, the end of the course and should normally be in written form. Course evaluations must also be performed in courses involving essay and thesis writing. Course evaluations should also be implemented following course components constituting six higher education credits or more.

2. Responding to a course evaluation is voluntary for students. For this reason it is important that course evaluations be carried out in such a way as to promote a high response rate.

3. Course evaluations should be anonymous unless there are special circumstances. In this context anonymity means that names and the equivalent are not used in the course evaluation.

4. Course evaluations must be designed in such a way that assessments address factual matters, e.g. achievement of course objectives, how the course was implemented and organised, and the input of teachers and students. Students should also have opportunities to comment on the course, e.g. by offering concrete suggestions for improvement.

5. The privacy of employees and students must be respected in all work with course evaluations.

6. If the free text responses of students are published on a Web site or in any other way, this must be preceded by a review of privacy considerations and be approved by the University officer in charge (not a paid student).
7. Course evaluations are to be used by the responsible bodies and decision-makers in the continuous development of education. Compilations of student responses must be summarised and evaluated within the framework of a course report from the teacher responsible for the course or another individual appointed to do so. The course report must contain both student and teacher viewpoints and give an account of the strengths and weaknesses of the course, along with suggestions for possible improvements. Central viewpoints from the students’ own free text responses must be summarised and accounted for in the course report.

The course report should be one of several bases for decisions in the development and revision of courses.

8. Students must be informed early in the course about the outcome of previous course evaluation(s) and about what measures, if any, have been taken or will be taken.

9. The person in charge or the body that the faculty board has appointed to be responsible shall ensure:
   – that course evaluations are performed, compiled, and used in developmental work,
   – that a course report is compiled as promptly as possible in order to provide a foundation for revisions of courses to come, normally within two months following the end of the course,
   – that a course report and compilations of student responses are readily available to teachers and students,
   – that a course report and compilations of student responses are archived indefinitely in a suitable form,
   – that students’ individual questionnaire responses are archived for two years after being summarised (applies also to electronically gathered information in the form of raw data).

10. The faculty board must annually ensure that work with course evaluations is followed up in its domain and that the results of the follow-up are channelled back to the faculty board and the department heads involved. If it is deemed appropriate or necessary, the respective faculty boards are responsible for issuing supplementary guidelines.