



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

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Guidelines for course evaluations

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The University has the responsibility to develop and renew its educational offerings. Course evaluations offer students an important opportunity to contribute to this process of quality assurance and enhancement. The active involvement of students is emphasised and specified further in the Teaching and Learning Programme for Uppsala University (UFV 2015/826).

Course evaluations fulfil two main functions:

- they give students an opportunity to reflect on their learning and education in a structured manner, and
- they provide a basis for quality enhancement.

The results of course evaluations are one of the inputs for deciding on course development and changes.

Chapter 1, Section 4 of the Higher Education Act (1992:1434) states that:

Quality assurance procedures are the shared concern of staff and students at higher education institutions.

The Act continues (Chapter 1, Section 4a):

Students shall be entitled to exert influence over the courses and study programmes at higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions shall endeavour to enable students to play an active role in the continued development of courses and study programmes.

The Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) makes more detailed provisions (Chapter 1, Section 14):

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.

Disciplinary domain/faculty boards are responsible for the quality of research and education in their respective domains. The boards decide on responsibilities, procedures and formats for conducting course evaluations. The boards are also responsible for ensuring that the course evaluation process is designed in a way that meets the needs of their activities.

These University-wide guidelines provide direction for work on course evaluations and are intended for courses¹ in the first (Bachelor's), second (Master's) and third (doctoral) cycles.

1. A summative course evaluation must be carried out at or close to the end of the course. This should² be done in writing. A course evaluation must be carried out for all courses, including courses involving thesis writing and degree projects, and for internship courses. A course evaluation may also be carried out after modules.
2. Formative course evaluations (which are conducted during the course) may be used to supplement the summative course evaluation. If module evaluations or formative course evaluations are used, the results of these should be mentioned in the course report (see further points 9 and 10).
3. Responding to a course evaluation is voluntary for students.
4. As far as possible, course evaluations should be anonymous. They must not ask for students'

¹A course is defined as the largest unit in undergraduate or Master's education for which a grade is awarded. Such courses must have a syllabus. In doctoral education, a course can also mean a part of a doctoral programme for which credit is given. A module is defined as a part of a course that is stated in the syllabus to have a certain scope in credits and a defined content.

² In a guideline, the word 'should' means that reasons are needed for applying the guideline in a way that differs from the way that is described.

names or similar means of identification.

5. It is important to respect the privacy of staff and students in all aspects of course evaluations.
6. If students' free-text responses are to be published in full, this must always be preceded by screening from a privacy perspective. Responses must be anonymised by removing names of persons and any offensive comments or personal attacks must be reformulated without detracting from the meaning of comments. If a student's written comments are altered, it is important that it is clear which parts are direct quotations and which have been reworded. However, the original responses need to be preserved (see also point 12e). Full publication of free-text responses must not be approved by a paid student.
7. Course evaluations should be designed so that assessments address factual matters, e.g. achievement of course objectives, the execution and organisation of the course, and the contributions of teachers and students. Students should also have opportunities to comment on the course in free-text responses, e.g. by offering concrete suggestions for improvements.
8. Course evaluations should be used by the responsible bodies and decision-makers in the continuous development of education. In order to obtain data that is as representative as possible, it is important that course evaluations be carried out in a way that encourages a high response rate.
9. A compilation must be made of responses to summative course evaluations³. A compilation of responses must also be made when summative course evaluations are held orally. The compilation can be summarised in the course report, or appended to the course report in its entirety where appropriate.
10. A course report must be written in which the responses to the course evaluation and the execution of the course are evaluated by a course director or other person appointed for the purpose. The course report must thus include the views of both students and teachers and must describe the strengths and weaknesses of the course, along with any suggestions for improvements and proposed measures, if relevant. Key views from students' free-text responses should be summarised and presented in the course report.
11. The students must be actively informed as soon as possible about results of course evaluations, any suggestions for improvements and any measures taken or planned as a result of the compilation of responses and course report. Both students who have had the opportunity to respond to the course evaluation and new students taking the course must be informed. New students must be informed of the result at an early stage of the course when it is next given.
12. The official or body appointed by the domain/faculty board is responsible for ensuring
 - a. that course evaluations are conducted, a compilation of responses is made and the results are used in development work;
 - b. that a course report is written as soon as possible to serve as a basis for changes in future courses, normally within two months after the end of the course;
 - c. that a compilation of student responses and a course report are readily available to teachers and students concerned in accordance with point 11, and that they are informed about where to find the documents;
 - d. that a compilation of student responses and a course report are registered and archived indefinitely;
 - e. that the students' individual written responses are preserved for two years after the compilation is made.

³ A compilation means a presentation of the responses to the course evaluation. This means giving an account of both quantitative data (e.g. the breakdown of responses to questions with predetermined alternative answers) and qualitative data (e.g. free-text responses, comments).

13. The domain/faculty board must periodically ensure that the work on course evaluations is followed up in an appropriate manner in its domain and that feedback is provided to relevant stakeholders on the results of the follow-up. If deemed appropriate or necessary, the relevant board is responsible for issuing supplementary provisions.

The document “Guidance on course evaluations: support and advice for working on course evaluations” is linked to the guidelines. The guidance document follows the numbering in the guidelines and contains more detailed reasoning, support and advice on how to proceed to meet the requirements in the guidelines.